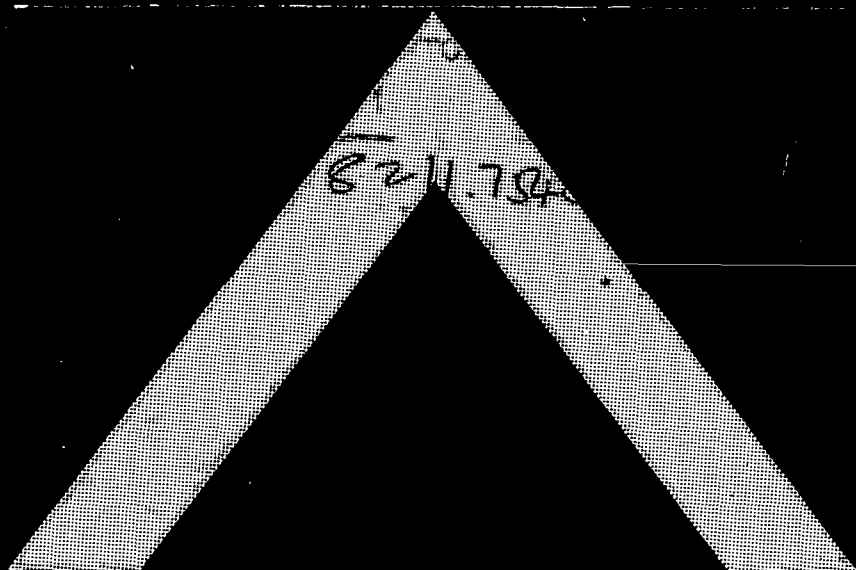
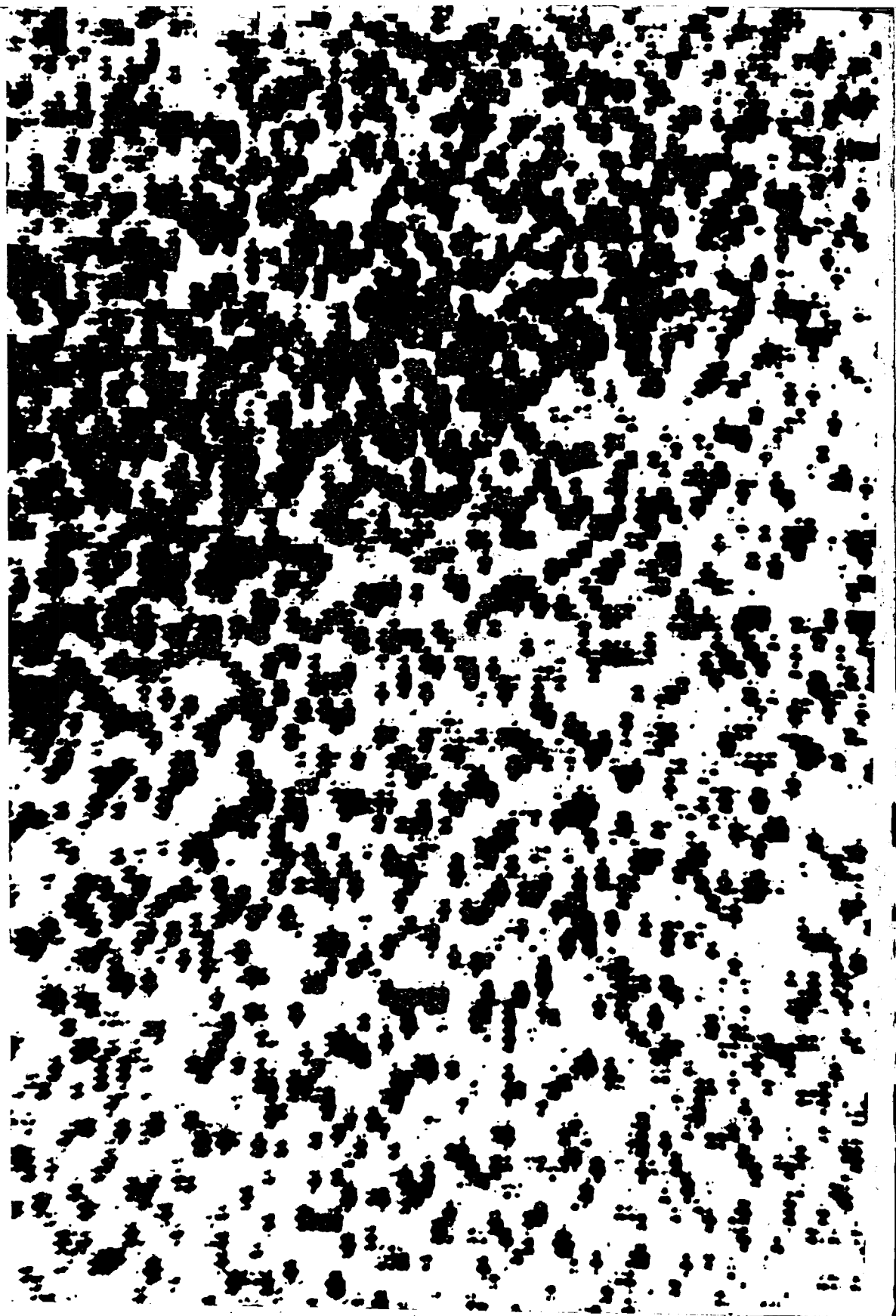


SCREEN



HAROLD WILSON INTERVIEW
INNER SPEECH: WILLEMEN
MODERNIST CRITICISM: KELLY
SNOW'S 'PRESENTS': DE LAURETIS
EQUALITY IN THE ACTT





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In her article, which starts from an examination of Michael Snow's recent film *Presents* (1981), Teresa De Lauretis raises some important questions for feminist film practice. She demonstrates how even a radical cinema such as *Presents*, which sets up the problematic of the cinematic apparatus, and demonstrates the relations and terms of its vision (including woman as object, ground and support of representation) nevertheless produces and breaks a nexus of look and identification in relation to the traditionally sexually undifferentiated spectator:

As in classical cinema, Presents addresses its disruption of look and identification to a masculine spectator-subject.

She argues that the question of the modalities of spectatorship available to women should not be confined to the demonstration of the absence of such positions, nor move from that to affirmative action which asserts simply a different 'feminist' position. Rather, the struggle for the feminist critique is to resist the pressure,

towards coherence, unity and the production of a fixed self/image, a subject-vision, and to insist, instead, on the production of contradictory points of identification.

She proposes that narrative (understood as the unfolding of the oedipal scenario, of positionalities of desire) is a condition of signification and identification. Narrative mediates the relation of image and language. Consequently, questions of identification and position of women spectators can only be addressed through narrative. But a feminist practice aims to elaborate different economies which disrupt the masculine: feminine polarities of the oedipal scenario. Or as Mary Kelly puts in her article in this issue, feminist criticism examines

how that contradiction (the crisis of positionality) is articulated in particular practices and to what extent it demonstrates that masculine and feminine positions are never fixed.

Mary Kelly examines the structure of modernist art criticism, demonstrating its dependence on traditional notions of authorship and the authorial subject. The modernist discourse, she argues, constructs a category of the 'expressive' artistic text, in which painting is dominant. The art object's investment with authorial subjectivity is secured (literally and financially in the case of the artist's signature) with the gesture. Progressive aspects of the so-called 'dematerialisation' of the art object in the 1970s are recuperated by this authorial discourse. The effect of much performance art, for instance, was to put into circulation the artistic personality as a commodity. The art object was pared down to its modernist essentials — the authenticity of the artist's experience of his or her own body. Radical practices which contest these notions of expressivity, of the co-incidence of artist and authorial subject, and attempt to raise issues of representation, of production of meaning, of institutions and conditions which determine the reading of texts, and the sexual over-determination of meaning which takes place in that process, are on the defensive. In order to exploit the discontinuities and contradictions which exist in modernism, they need the support of a theoretical criticism which it is the responsibility of *Screen*, as well as other journals, to provide.

Paul Willemsen, in his article 'Cinematic Discourse — The Problem of Inner Speech' returns to concerns of the interdependence of the verbal and visual in cinema first posed in an early issue of *Screen* ('Reflections on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema', *Screen* vol 15 no 4, 1974/5). From a demonstration of the structuring effect of

verbal signifiers on the formation of images, he moves to consider psychoanalytic theories of language and proposes that inner speech is the discourse and process binding text, subject and sense into sociality, connecting the psychoanalytic subject and the subject in history. He points to the complexity of the interrelations between the processes of signification and our understanding of how social formations can be changed. The areas of investigation his approach opens up are wide-ranging and difficult to break down into discrete topics for research. This no doubt is a sign that work on inner speech is very much in progress.

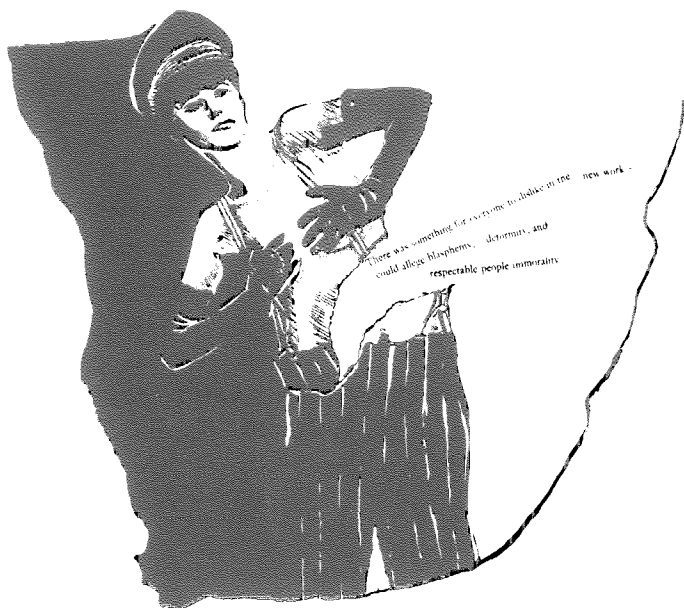
Finally, we would draw readers' attention to our recently published *Screen Reader 2* 'Cinema and Semiotics', which is available from SEFT.

MARK NASH

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MARGARET DICKINSON AND SIMON HARTOG INTERVIEW SIR HAROLD WILSON

9

Introduction

SIR HAROLD WILSON'S special interest in the film industry was demonstrated in recent years by the initiative he took in 1975 in setting up the Prime Minister's Working Party on the Future of the British Film Industry and by his own subsequent work as Chairman of the Interim Action Committee. It is an interest which dates back to the early years of his political career when, between 1947 and 1951, he was President of the Board of Trade. Then, as now, films were the responsibility of the government department concerned with trade, and under Wilson a number of important decisions were taken which have shaped the character of industry-government relations ever since.

At this time, post war economic problems, the national debt and the acute shortage of foreign exchange impinged in a significant way on government thinking about the film industry. The American films, which in 1945, occupied 80 per cent of screen time had to be paid for with dollars, and the government was subjected to hostile comment in Parliament and the Press for authorising this use of dollars at a time when food was still severely rationed. But the extent to which the government's economic strategy was bound up with obtaining American aid inhibited it from precipitat-

This is an edited version of an interview which took place in March 1981 as part of the research Margaret Dickinson and Simon Hartog are doing for their forthcoming study on the history of state intervention in the British film industry.

ing a confrontation with the American film lobby by cutting film imports. The major Hollywood companies were represented by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and its export department, the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA) and, under the leadership of Eric Johnston, the MPAA was regarded as so powerful that it was sometimes referred to as the 'Little State Department'.

One of the conditions of the American loan obtained by the British Government in 1946 was that sterling would become convertible with the dollar for trading purposes in July 1947. Economic recovery, however, was slower than anticipated and within a year the loan was nearly exhausted. When the pound became convertible there was a serious 'run' on sterling and the government had to re-impose restrictions and search for further reductions in imports. It was following this crisis, in August 1947, that the decision was taken to impose a massive duty on imported films which was intended to absorb 75 per cent of the revenue which would otherwise have been remitted to the United States. MPAA reacted to this by effectively calling for a boycott of the British market. In Britain the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA) criticised the duty complaining that within six months their business would be ruined. Meanwhile American films already in the country continued to play in the cinemas and the revenue from them, untouched by the duty, continued to flow out. This was the most urgent film problem faced by Wilson when he took over from Sir Stafford Cripps as President of the Board of Trade in October 1947. He took charge of negotiations with Eric Johnston which led to the Anglo-American Agreement of 1948. The duty was withdrawn in return for an arrangement whereby the American companies limited their remittances to \$17 million per year. The balance could be used in Britain for certain specified purposes including investment in British film production.

The dollar problem had added a new dimension to a long standing controversy about the film industry. Arguments revolved round the question of how far the state should intervene firstly, to protect or aid national film production and secondly, to control the monopolistic activities of the two big integrated companies, Rank and ABPC. (The latter was merged with EMI in 1969 and is now part of Thorn-EMI.) British films already received some minimal protection as a result of the Quota Acts of 1927 and 1938. The 1938 Act had also established the Cinematograph Films Council (CFC), an advisory body composed of representatives of the trade and a number of independent (ie non-trade) members.

There was, however, a body of opinion which considered existing measures inadequate or even counter-productive. A report on monopoly produced for the Board of Trade in 1944 by independent members of the Films Council had endorsed this view, recommending, among other things, the establishment of a film bank and of an independent tribunal to arbitrate in the case of trade disputes. No action was taken on these recommendations either before or after the 1945 election. The new Films Act of 1948, which had been prepared when Cripps was President, did little except modify and extend some of the provisions of the 1938 Quota Act.

About a year after Wilson took charge it became clear that the film industry was approaching a crisis. Production, which had risen in the first years after the war, began to fall and in 1949 the industry experienced one of the most severe recessions in its history. There were different schools of thought about the causes of the slump. Some blamed the Rank Organisation and its policy of making high cost films intended for the American market; some blamed the Board of Trade and the way in which the import duty had been handled; some blamed the high level of entertainment tax levied on cinema takings.

Wilson had by this time taken some steps to clarify the issues and bring together opposing factions. In 1948 he set up the National Film Production Council, a committee composed of representatives of employers and employees in production and chaired by the President of the Board of Trade. This committee, it was hoped, would promote co-operation and efficiency but according to the trade press, it was paralysed after its first meetings by the employers' refusal to divulge financial information. In face of the general lack of reliable information on the industry Wilson set up three new enquiries, one on the availability of studio space, one on production costs and one on distribution and exhibition. This last was the most complex and sensitive of the investigations since it dealt with the mechanisms by which the two big companies exercised control. It is sometimes referred to as the Portal Committee and sometimes as the Plant Committee. The original chairman was Lord Portal, a prominent businessman who was head of the paper firm, Wiggins and Teape, which printed banknotes and who had in the 1930s, been involved in establishing what eventually became the Rank Group. He died during the enquiry, however, and the job was finished by Professor Plant, an economist and one of the members of the Films Council who had worked on the 1944 monopoly

report. The Plant Report confirmed many of the allegations of monopolistic practices made against Rank and ABPC but did not recommend extreme remedies such as compulsory divorcement or partial nationalisation. The main concession to the anti-monopoly lobby was a proposal that an independent authority should be set up to regulate the affairs of the industry. This proposal was not adopted and, a quarter of a century later, the idea was revived by the Prime Minister's Working Party in its proposal for a British Film Authority.

The main lasting result of Wilson's work on the film industry was the introduction of two forms of financial aid for production. The first, the National Film Finance Corporation was a bank, such as Palache and others had proposed although its powers were less extensive than had been recommended. It was first set up specifically to help independent producers. The events which preceeded its creation were that Alexander Korda's company, British Lion, which was the main source of production finance outside Rank and ABPC, was in danger of collapsing. At the same time one of the most prominent independent producers, Del Guidice, was unable to raise money. Wilson tried unsuccessfully to raise a loan for Korda through existing institutions and, in the summer of 1948, he set up a company, the National Film Finance Company, which borrowed from the Treasury and lent to British Lion. Legislation was then prepared and the Corporation was set up by the Cinematograph Film Production (Special Loans) Act 1949 and replaced the Company.

The other form of aid, known as the Eady Levy, was a kind of subsidy paid out of cinema receipts. It was introduced against the background of a vigorous campaign by the trade against the high level of entertainment tax. Just after the crisis of 1949 they had suggested that the NFFC alone would not keep British production afloat. The producers' association, the BFPA, had proposed in 1948 that some of the entertainment tax should be used to help producers. There were precedents for such an arrangement in that France and Italy had recently introduced parafiscal aids. The levy, as instituted in 1950, was a voluntary arrangement whereby in exchange for a reduction in entertainments tax, exhibitors agreed to pay a small percentage of their receipts into a fund which made payments to producers of British films in proportion to the box office receipts of their films. It was called Eady after Sir Wilfred Eady, a treasury official. The levy was made statutory under a Conservative Government in 1957.

MD & SH: *When you were President of the Board of Trade, you devoted probably more time and attention to the film industry than any President before or since. What were the reasons for this?*

Sir Harold: Well, I had plenty of other things to do. For example, I was negotiating our first-ever big trade agreement with the Russians. And I was responsible for cotton and all the other industries, but film was an important industry; it was also one that tended to be in the public eye. The main reason, I suppose, was financial. When the experiment with the convertibility of sterling broke down after two months, we had a freeze on as many American imports as we could.

That was the summer of 1947 when the duty was placed on films, wasn't it? But before that the cost of film imports had come in for public criticism. In the parliamentary discussions at the time it seems the matter was defined as 'Bogart or bacon'. I expect you remember the phrase . . .

I do . . .

I would be interested to know whether there would have been public support for a tougher line, or whether the closure of some cinemas would have been even more unpopular?

That point was made. Some ministers who knew nothing about films or film costs, or anything, were making that case. I seem to remember Herbert Morrison particularly.

Making which case?

Morale and keeping the cinemas open. And up to a point some of the Treasury people were saying, 'Look, if you haven't anything for them to spend the money on, we are going to have inflation, pushing up the price of goods in the shops', and this was at a time when nearly everything was price controlled. 'You would have had too much money chasing too few goods' was the phrase.

The crisis of 1949 was widely blamed on the duty and on the agreement. Do you think that that is fair?

Well the duty was really to establish a negotiating position. Eric Johnston from the MPAA, who at that time was regarded as one of three or four potential future presidents of the United States, came over. We signed this pact with him — it is dated the eleventh of March, 1948. It was in fact signed on the twelfth, the eleventh was my birthday so we decided to date it for the eleventh.

14 American pressures *In relation to the 1938 Films Act, there is a lot of documentation of direct and somewhat brutal American diplomatic pressure on the Board of Trade, and the British government. I have the impression that during the period you were President it was less direct, less brutal.*

No, sometimes the Ambassador or the economic minister came to make representations, and then when I was in America I got it.

From the MPAA, or from the government?

Both. I went on a trade tour, it must have been 1948. I went to Chicago, where Eric Johnston was having a meeting. I remember the date of the meeting, and that was the first of June. He telephoned me and said he was having a hell of a time defending me, justifying the best settlement he was able to get, and would I agree to meet all the leading figures of MPAA while I was there. And I said yes — I have never seen such a scrum in my life. Bernie Balaban and Nick Schenck, Major Warner, Spiro of course; I can't remember who the others all were, but there were eight of them.

How much influence did they really have in the State Department?

It varied you know. The State Department is a very loose organisation of people, changing all the time, coming in and out, and some congressman wants his local college head or whoever it may be to come in, and it's an absolute shambles. Like everything else in American administration, they organise things on the vertical basis, and on the horizontal basis at the same time. The State Department pressures on films were very variable. Some would have been thrown right out by the MPAA.

From the end of the war to 1948, there are some notes from the Embassy suggesting that the pressure of the MPAA was so effective that the failure to come to satisfactory terms might influence Marshal Aid, trade agreements and such like.

That's true.

Did they wield that sort of influence?

Well, as I say, with some people in the State Department. And of course the chaps here have to respond to every message from the State Department whichever level or area of the State Department it comes from. But we just said we can't do any better than we are doing financially, so you had better go back and tell them. I

think in some cases they were happy to get these answers so they could say they had raised it and there was no hope.

Was it a question of innuendoes, or was it ever made explicit?

More innuendoes, yes.

Were there definite schools of opinion within the Labour Party in parliament on what should be done about the film industry, and was pressure brought to bear on you?

British pressures

In the first place there were those who had their friends. There were constituency pressures, and none better organised than the Scottish — Alec King, he became a great friend of mine afterwards, I went to see him two days before he died. Then there were those who thought the whole thing was a kind of capitalistic racket, made the more so because of Rank and to a lesser extent ABC. If there was going to be money made available it should be going into productive industry, shipyards or whatever. And certainly not without control, and some would have said no money without nationalisation.

How do these pressures get through to the President of the Board of Trade. Is it through MPs in the corridors of Parliament?

There is always a sizeable film lobby on both sides of the House, not merely those people with Denham, Pinewood and so on; and the House then, and I have no doubt now, of course now we have television, had a great number of film experts. How far their expertise went I don't know, but they were much more sophisticated about film quality, for example, than I was. I used to spend a lot of time in the smoke room. People would come up — the people who came to see me most I would have said were unpaid lobbyists, on constituency grounds. The other thing affecting Labour members was the lobbying by ACTT, they were quite powerful as they are now.

What about NATKE?

Tom O'Brien, NATKE's secretary, was in the House; he was regarded as the bosses' man in the House, and in the industry. He was a nice fellow, I got on well with him but his speeches were all very much for exhibitors. They could have been written, and perhaps were, by the CEA, you know, their trade organisation.

One thing which I find, again looking at somewhat disorganised records, archives, somewhat hard to judge, was the role of the

officials within the Board of Trade in the formulation of policy. It seems mainly that there was one civil servant who was in charge of the films department, and he was basically writing most of the policy statement.

You are absolutely right about this, completely apart from the rest of the Department. This particular man came from the Lake District.

Somervell?

Yes. He was from a very rich family up there. If it had been a few miles further North he would have been a Laird. He was a loveable person, I thought he was ideal for that job although at first I wanted a real 'go getter'. He really was living in a world where films had never been invented; he would have been very happy in the early Victorian period. He treated the whole subject with a certain degree of aristocratic disdain. And the people involved in the film industry even more so; he thought they were a bunch of scroungers, lower class businessmen, and the rest of it. But he also felt that the President, especially a sort of young keen one like me, who had actually gone to the cinemas when I was young, needed some protection from them. Some quasi-divine guidance really. He was a lovely character. The industry loved him.

You say that you had actually been to the cinema. Did the other people in the Cabinet go to the cinema?

In our Cabinet I would think so, yes. Atlee was quite keen on the odd film. Bevin yes, and the younger ones certainly. The majority of the Cabinet came from working class or lower middle class backgrounds, and most of them would have gone to the pictures a lot, and Chuter Ede, Home Secretary, yes he was quite keen. He used to take his sister.

One gets the impression that the film industry, unlike in most other European countries, was the responsibility of a trade department which was primarily industrial or commercial in its perspective, and that that has had fundamental influence over government.

I think that is very true. Certainly true before my time as well. But our trade department, unlike some departments on the continent, was bifocal; we were both home and overseas trade. However, some of our people had been trained in the *laissez-faire* era so you had to make a case for interference. The idea of subsidies was not

pleasing to them at all. Although, with a lot of wartime recruitment, and quite a number of people, particularly economics dons and others, came in during the war. They stayed on and were established as permanent civil servants. A number of them got to the top. The war made a big difference but there were still a lot of the earlier generation around.

But the perspective of the Board of Trade was primarily industrial, whereas in France films were in the education ministry for example.

Yes, it had to be treated as an industry in the same way as you did the timber industry, or the cotton industry, the wool industry. And films were so different particularly with these glamorous looking foreign producers and directors, most of them making it their business to entertain ministers and civil servants lavishly. If I could just mention the film premiers — Alex Korda had just made *Bonnie Prince Charlie*; a ghastly film actually, and we went to his very lush flat and they were all swooning around him, all the ladies. 'Oh Alex, absolutely marvellous', and so forth. Then he came to me and said 'Well Mr President, did you like it?' and I said 'Personally, I enjoyed it'. I said 'Look, it cost you £750,000 and you won't make £150,000 at the box office'. Fairly brash remark. I was wrong too, it made £151,000 at the box office. And he said, 'Well, you wait 'til you see my next film, it is filmed in the sewers of Vienna', and I said, 'Alex I can't wait'. How wrong I was. It was *The Third Man*.

You spent a lot of time dealing more generally with monopoly in industry. I would be interested to know whether you felt that similar principles could be applied to the film industry, or whether it was a rather different type of issue?

It was different, and of course, it was so divided between the producers and the exhibitors, and my problem was simply to keep the cinemas in existence. In a sense, I would have said they were the more powerful lobby, certainly in Parliament, because they have got an MP in every cinema as it were, you know. Well cinemas in every constituency if you like, and I think if I had a bias (each side thought I had a bias against it) my bias was all the time for production.

Was this the reason you raised the British quota to 45 per cent?

That was a little optimistic I think. But that was also designed to strengthen my hand with the Americans. I knew there would be some failures to reach it which we would condone, or even the

scaling down of it the next time round. But I wanted to get something out of the Americans first.

To pursue this point a little. You once made an oft quoted remark in Parliament about problems in dealing with the film industry, because the producers never agreed with the exhibitor. I would like to get a bit of the flavour of the pressure from your point of view.

It is still true. We found when we set up my film committee, the exhibitors felt they should have had direct representation on it. But they have always been like that except, of course, in so far as there was integration. I mean when you've got . . . When Rank were dealing in film-making in a big way and there was austere J Arthur — I loved J Arthur; very austere, very methodist. I visited him at his house one day, a very austere meal. We played golf first, nine holes, he won all nine. He suffered greatly, he had to read scripts that seemed rather sexy for him you know, but John Davis was a most unpopular man in the industry — partly I think because he was carrying the can for J Arthur. I mean I was on very bad terms with him. It was only about two or three years ago, up until I resigned from No. 10, that we sort of made it up over lunch.

The NFFC & the
Eady Levy

Stafford Cripps had been my predecessor and even when he was Chancellor he took a great interest in all these things. He was a great man but he had his softnesses and weaknesses for certain individuals — Del Guidice was his man. I remember going out to Del's, visiting a barn near High Wycombe, all tiger skins all over the place. And, about seven o'clock one morning, Stafford telephoned to say that Del was having to pay off his workers. He couldn't get on with his film and I said, 'Look Stafford, there is nothing I can do, I haven't got any money at all. The Treasury are refusing, my officials are knocking on their door every day.' So he said, 'You shall have it', and I said, 'Well, you'll have to give the instruction.' So I got my permanent secretary to phone theirs and we were able to make a start.

When you say that the Treasury was refusing, are you referring to the period just before the NFFC was set up? There was an idea then to use the Finance Corporation for Industry in conjunction with British Lion, wasn't there?

British Lion was going to be the chosen instrument for a time. Either FCI, or ICFC (the Industrial and Commercial Finance Corporation); we were looking at them both.

That wasn't a government organisation was it, it was a bank?

A merchants' bank, yes. But again we had no real means of putting pressure on these organisations. What I set up at the time, the same time as NFFC, was quite different. It was I think brought into one or two projects, the National Research Development Corporation.

Part of the purpose of the NFFC was to influence an improvement and efficiency in the industry wasn't it? But you also set up the National Film Production Council. Could you say a little bit about why you did that? It didn't actually seem to achieve quite what it was intended to, did it?

It didn't. On the other hand it was a lovely talking shop; get it off your chest, and they could all go back and say, 'I told the President!'

What specifically was the attitude of the Treasury in relation to the setting up of the NFFC?

Well it involved expenditure, so they thought it was wrong. On the other hand they were slowly coming to terms with the fact that we had a more or less socialist government and I suppose they consoled themselves by saying, 'Well, if the film industry does perish, then we would lose a lot of tax revenue and maybe it's a sprat to catch a mackerel, but we fear that once this has started they will want more money than they're talking about now'.

This is the NFFC? And Eady was somewhat easier because there was somebody in the treasury?

Wilfred Eady was a very vain man. As I say some of these civil servants are; they love to be out negotiating with industry, to be known, and even to have their names mentioned in the papers. I was on holiday in Cornwall in August of the previous year, staying with my family, and I had a favourite walk down to the sea and it was while I was walking on my own there with the dog, I suddenly thought of this idea to, as it were, redress the balance of prosperity within the industry (I've mentioned my built-in bias towards production in the industry). I knew the Treasury would have to do it, and I knew Eady was very vain and so when I came back, I suppose I must have put it on paper, I don't know, but we had a meeting anyway and he was delighted for it to be called the Eady Levy, and it's still there. As in the last Film Bill.

You mentioned in relation to the 1947 dollar crisis that part of the

Treasury was anxious for the American companies to invest in British productions.

To bring dollars in. They are still keen on it.

There were also arguments the other way. I think even one of the other film people in the Board of Trade wrote a memo saying that these films wouldn't be British, and in the long run it wouldn't be to our advantage. That is still a controversy which has gone on, right up until the present.

Well they would be automatically committing themselves to lower employment in British studios, and more dependence on dollar films. The Americans knew that we couldn't go on blocking film dollars for ever. And to the extent that we were, they would be moving more into making American films in Britain.

So your own view was that the co-production arrangements were healthy and it was all right.

On the whole, certainly for employment.

Monopoly & the Plant Report

If we can tackle you with a couple of things relating to memos that you wrote in 1949 . . .

If the language is very elegant they were drafted by Somervell.

No, it's a memo to Somervell to which he replies. There was a Cabinet meeting in March of 1949 where the film industry was discussed. The conclusion noted was that the government should take action to increase the efficiency of the industry, and to secure any necessary measure of control. I'll read the whole quote: 'The Cabinet invited the President of the Board of Trade on receipt of the report of the Portal Committee on the structure of the film industry, to submit a full factual report on the industry to the Cabinet with recommendations on the action which the government should take to increase the efficiency of the industry, and to secure any necessary measure of control'.

This was (Lord) Wyndham Portal, wasn't it?

That's right.

A wrong choice for the thing.

Why do you say he was the wrong choice?

He was in part in the film industry, but he was a tycoon and a monopolist in his own area. Arnold Plant was on it, he was a

laissez-faire economist, so he was just the kind of chap the Department of the Board of Trade would choose.

He was a rather interesting . . . he was out of the ordinary in the sense that he knew quite a bit about copyright, and things like that.

But his prejudices were certainly for less state intervention, and less help for industry.

But in terms of the Cabinet conclusion, what does to secure any necessary measure of control mean? Is it a vague expression?

No, Atlee's summing up was always very tight and good. I have a feeling that old Ernie (Bevin) was being briefed by somebody, I can't remember who it was; and had his prejudices against some other people in the industry, and probably he said, 'It's all getting out of control.' I'm pretty sure that was Ernie. I know he did intervene a bit on this, he did on a lot of other things, always from a particular angle. I guess Ernie was being got at by somebody and he didn't like foreigners. That's why he was such a good foreign secretary.

After that Cabinet discussion later in the year, you wrote a memo to Somervell which suggested you were very unhappy with developments so far, even the NFFC I would think.

Is this 1949 or 50?

September 1949.

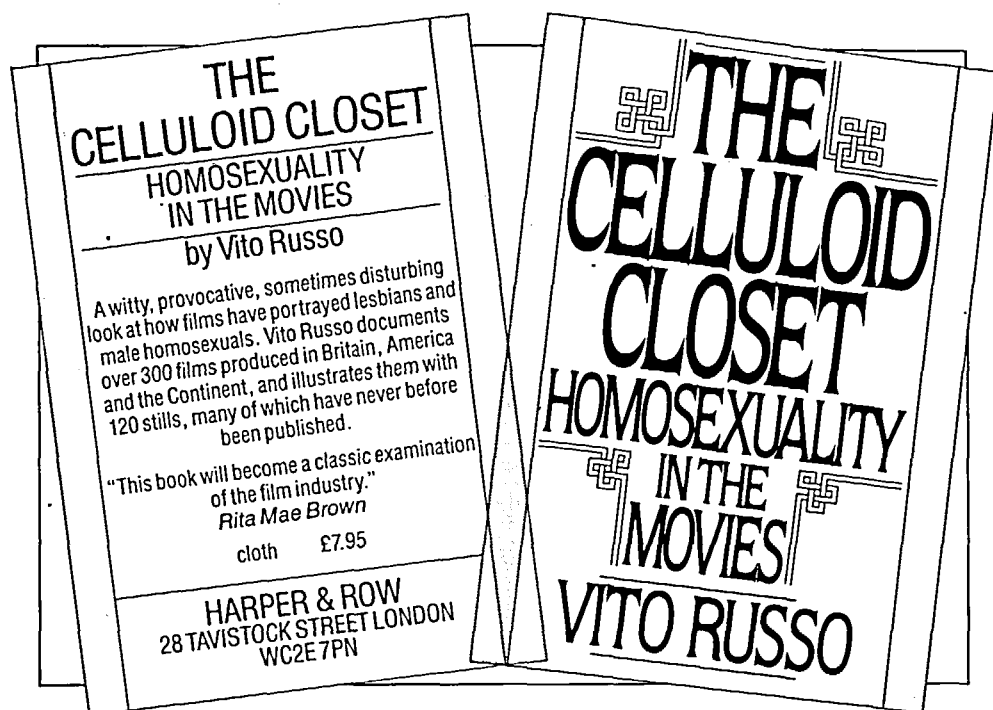
Yes, this is devaluation time.

Yes, but basically it is referring to the film industry and you are unhappy with the reports of the committees that you had appointed. You say, 'However much work the NFFC may do on financial standing, quality, and prospects of scripts, in the last resort their action is largely conditioned by the decision of one or two of these gentlemen'. Your 'two gentlemen' being the two circuit managers who you call 'oriental potentates'. And you propose that more radical action should be taken on the film industry, and you get back a very bland memorandum from Mr Somervell saying basically that Michael Balcon says everything is all right, and therefore we didn't need to do anything. And that's the end. Basically there is a tone of some disillusion, or despair in your paper.

I had a big worry at the time with devaluation. It had been worked out between Hugh Gaitskill, Jay and myself. Stafford Cripps — who had said there would be no devaluation — was still Chancellor, but very ill. We were like a Treasury team in the absence of the Chancellor. Sorry, that is beside the point but this would explain this document, because it had been a very traumatic experience for all of us.

It seems to me that your conclusions in the document about the position of the film industry at that point were quite correct. But what I thought was interesting was the way the civil servant in effect said there is no need to do anything. And I just wondered to what extent the feelings you expressed there remain with you?

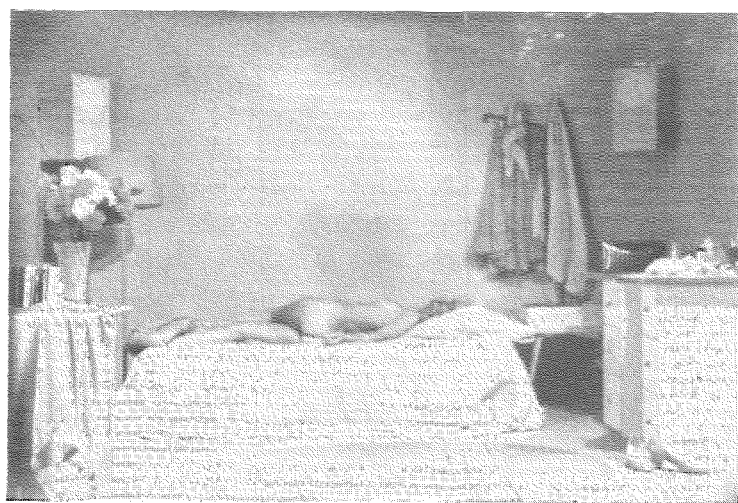
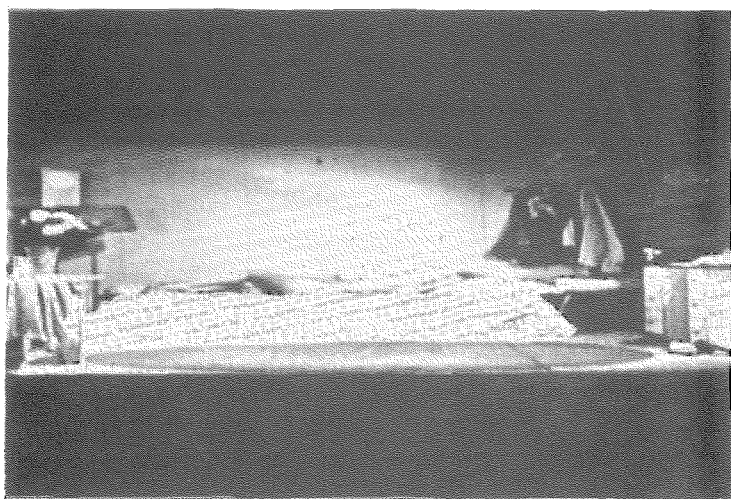
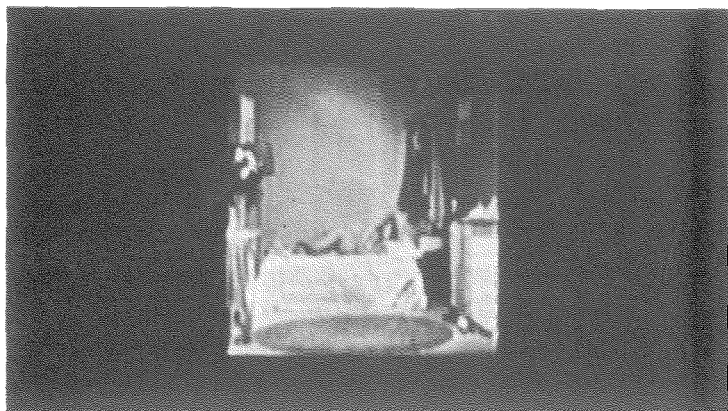
Oh, I think they always did. I was moving away from the traditional non-interventionism of the Board of Trade, to intervention and what we now call planning. For one thing I had been shattered by the inability of the Treasury to see what was happening, merely to give serious warnings of various other kinds, and by what I thought was the very poor quality of some of their top people and their remoteness from ordinary life, and above all from ordinary industry.



Screen Education No. 40

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Presents, section I

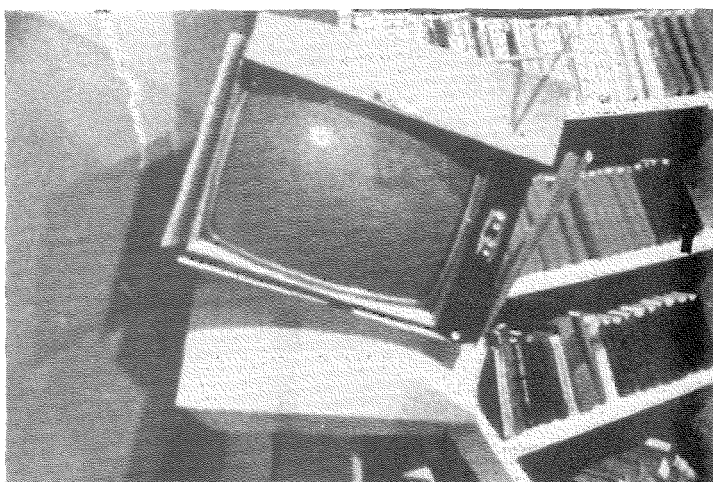
TERESA DE LAURETIS

SNOW ON THE OEDIPAL STAGE

25

MICHAEL SNOW'S LATEST film, *Presents* (1981), opens with a shot of what appears to be a white vertical line quivering in the middle of the black screen. Slowly the line begins to stretch out horizontally to form a column, then a rectangle, and to reveal its image content, to 'present' an image. As it widens, the vertical 'slit' on the screen unfolds its vision: a naked woman reclining on a bed. The image continues to stretch, forming a more and more horizontally elongated rectangle, still defined as 'an image' by the margins of darkened screen that frame it above and below; when it reaches the two small sides of the screen, it has become a horizontal line. Then it begins to stretch out vertically, until it reaches the aspect ratio of a movie screen, though smaller than the real screen whose proportions it maintains. Then it stops. The image is now fully revealed as a nude, its size that of a painting — but the actress's body has been moving intermittently all along, as if in sleep: it is clearly a filmed nude, not a painted one, a motion picture, a filmic image, not a still photograph nor a painting.

The next shot, marking a transition to the second scene or segment of the film, shows the same woman, bed and room, but now the image is in pastel colours — pink, blue, ivory — and takes up the full screen. The pulsating sound that has provided a continuous surface until this moment, ceases. There is a knock at a door. The woman jumps out of bed, puts on a blue robe and pink shoes, and starts walking screen-right toward the off-screen door. The camera seems to follow her into a living room, a locale contiguous with the bedroom in what is very obviously a stage



Presents, section II

set. And the stage, not the camera, has been moving, rotating in the opposite direction, in front of a fixed camera. The second scene of the film presents the woman and her visitor, a fully clothed man who brings her flowers, as they search for something (a paper, some form of writing, a script?) misplaced somewhere in the living room. Truck noises are heard as the set tilts, shakes and vibrates; again the camera seems to follow the movements of the two people, moving back and forth from one end of the room to the other — or is it the stage that moves? — then begins to conduct a search of its own, investigating objects and furniture which wobble and fall, and with increasing aggression attacks tables, a couch, the TV set, until they crack, break up and shatter. The objects also appear reflected on a transparent, window-like surface moving with the camera. On the sound track, in addition to the truck noises, is recorded an angry squeaky sound very much reminiscent of that made by the alien in Ridley Scott's *Alien*. [As Michael Snow explained, the reflection was obtained by a slab of plexiglass mounted in front of the lens; the shaking and shattering of the set was effected by two fork lift trucks (hence the truck noises) which literally picked up and moved the stage during the filming of the scene.] The third section is composed of a sequence of quite unrelated shots of landscapes and skylines, vehicles, birds in flight, women walking, etc, some of which are distinctly marked culturally and geographically (maples on the US East Coast, the Rome Coliseum, Dutch canals, Goya's *Maja desnuda* at the Prado, photos of women on magazine covers, beaches, Eskimo sleds and igloos, tropical vegetation) as if to suggest a 'travelogue'. An irregular drum beat underscores each cut, remarking the end/the beginning of every shot.

Even from this brief description, one can infer some of the film's concerns — with cinematic representation and voyeuristic pleasure, the activity of the camera as inscription of the scopic drive and its sexualisation of the female body as object of the look; with *mise-en-scène* and montage, referentiality and signification; and with several expressive modalities and modes of sign production from painting to photography to video, from classical (studio, staged) cinema to avant-garde or 'structural' film.

At first, *Presents* seems very much unlike Snow's other works, primarily because for well over two thirds of its 90 minutes the dominant element is montage. (It would not be difficult, though, to point to references or at least traces of *Back and Forth* (←→) in the set and camera movement of section II, of *One Second in Montreal* in the images of snowy trees and parks in winter; of

Wavelength in the shots of waves framed and unframed, in the continuous 'surface' sound and slow transformation of the image in section I, as well as the fragments of narrative — minimal characters, shreds of dialogue, the 'search' — in section II; of *La région centrale* in the shots of clouds, sky and ground in section III, where the omnidirectionality of movement is now constructed in the editing room rather than by a special camera mount, thus discontinuous instead of continuous; and so forth.) Moreover, unlike the structurally overdetermined coherence we have come to associate with Snow's films since *Wavelength* (1967) and *La région centrale* (1971), there is here a formal discrepancy, an unrelatedness between the first two sections, dependent on a specifically constructed material apparatus (video used for film, stage and fork lifts, 'prepared' camera), and the third, whose constructive principle, montage, is one of the basic and intrinsic codes of cinematic discourse. That the latter may be new in Snow's film-making is beside the point, for it is this seeming discrepancy, rather than the new element of montage, that constitutes both the novelty of the film and its textual coherence, providing the terms in which is articulated its aesthetic unity.

In discussing the film after its first screening at the Chicago Art Institute (April 1981), Snow himself posed a series of relationships between the second and third sections: indoor/outdoor; staged *mise-en-scène*/shots of the real world (taken during a year of travel in Canada, Europe and the United States); single long take with prepared camera and stage apparatus/three-month work at the editing table. The transition between these sections, he indicated, is marked by the theme of the fall (downward travelling shots of buildings, of red and gold maples in the fall, of Niagara Falls, at the beginning of the montage echo the glass falling in the prior scene as well as a painting of Adam and Eve later on); while the over-riding concern of all three sections is with the process of looking through the camera and its inscription of distance and desire. These are, of course, central to the first section as well, which appropriately carries one of the film's main 'themes' (again, in Snow's words), 'women'.

The set of conceptual oppositions so precisely identified by Snow, and the mythical (narrative) theme of the Fall he eloquently described are perfectly consistent with one another, the latter being the condition of the former. It is the fallen state of man, exiled from Eden or imprisoned in the dark cave of Plato's myth, barred from the plenitude of body, vision and meaning, that imposes the separation of man from nature, of self from world;

from there, in the effort to recapture the lost totality of being, unity and bliss, have come the dialectical oppositions that characterise our culture and Snow's film: inside/outside, camera/event, active gaze/passive image, male/female. 'Oppositions are drama', he once said.¹

It would be possible, following his lead, to read the three sections of the film as a Lacanian passage from the infant's gaze on the breast — a continuous, contiguous unfolding of vision on the woman's body (the wholeness of the video image unfolding on the screen, re-marked by the sound surface) — to the mirror stage (the woman's body as a 'painterly' representation, as a nude, framed, in long shot), and the concomitant acquisition of language (on the collapsing set of section II, the man and the woman do exchange a few words); on to the aggressivity of the camera on the oedipal stage and, beyond that, the fully achieved entry into the symbolic (montage as the articulatory code of cinematic language, underscored and strengthened by the formal, musical 'punctuation' of the rhythmic drumbeat). Except that this entry into the symbolic, though it allows one to leave the closed, constricted space of the stage for the open, unlimited world of reality, is really, Snow suggests, a 'fall' into language. For that reality can never be wholly seen or grasped as a totality: the more variety in the sights and objects offered to vision, the more obvious and constraining is montage as the principle of articulation; and the length of this section contributes to the spectator's awareness of that constraint. Nor can it ever be totalised as meaning, since the project of Snow's montage, unlike Eisenstein's, is to prevent any associations between contiguous or alternate shots. Thus their succession would suggest, almost literally, a chain of signifiers on which meaning slides, with the movement of the camera, in every direction, the drumbeat signalling moments of suture, the appearing and disappearing of the subject there, the constant turn of imaginary and symbolic, and so on.

Not inconsistently with this reading, made possible by a theoretical-aesthetic discursive framework whose foundation is the woman as both object and support of representation and desire, one could also see the film as a history: a present-ation and an exploration of the history of cinematic representation and its modes of production (painting, photography, music, language, theatre, film, video), of the narrative strategies which anchor image to meaning, of the discourses and institutions which guarantee image circulation — museums, magazines, travelogues, documentaries, home movies, cinema from classical studio films to

1 'Michael Snow,' in Peter Gidal, ed, *Structural Film Anthology* London, BFI, 1978, p 37.

2 Stephen Heath,
'Narrative Space',
Screen, vol 17 no
3 (Autumn 1976),
pp 68-112.

contemporary 'electronic' and SFX (special effects) movies.

What is far less easy, for me, is to reconcile the film's critical, even self-critical position with regard to forms of visual representation and artistic practices (cf the irony of the title, 'Michael Snow "presents" . . .') with its assumption of the traditional modernist view that the 'origin' of art is (in) the artist, *whose* desire is inscribed in the representation, *whose* distance from, and longing for, the object desired is both mediated and effected by the lens, the camera, the apparatus; and *to whom*, finally, the film returns as its only possible reference, its source of aesthetic unity and meaning. For if reality cannot be grasped and totalised by the symbolic of cinema, which fragments, diffuses, limits and multiplies the object of vision, it is precisely that vision, at once constrained and constructed by the cinematic apparatus, that *Presents* in the last instance re-presents.

Classical narrative cinema poses the spectator as subject of vision, the 'figure for', and term of reference of, its constructed 'narrative space';² it does so through the operations of narrativisation, that hidden work of narrative which Snow's films, in particular, have exposed by excess, stretching its rules to the very limits, almost beyond recognition (eg the 45-minute zoom of *Wavelength*). With *Presents* the pendulum swings back to the film-maker as subject of vision; is it perhaps to test, expose, exceed *that* limit? After more than a decade of critical work in and on cinema bearing directly on the nexus of representation and sexual difference, and on the ideological fallacy of the subject-object dichotomy, one has to wonder. It would be tempting, in a way, to see Snow's film as the deployment of that epistemological-aesthetic-ideological paradigm to its ultimate limits, the critical working out of its expressive and productive possibilities from the painterly, artistic nude to commercial pornography on the magazine stand, from the individual's private fantasy in the bedroom to the mass media fantasy of the world — both constituted, like the artist's/subject's vision, by the clichés of patriarchal culture. Tempting, perhaps generous. But even so the film presents, and presents itself as, a statement, an assertion, a taking of position, a last stand. It is not, as were the earlier ones, a film working on a problem; at least not a problem for the spectator.

In the Realm of the Senses produces and breaks the apparatus of look and identification; it does so by describing — in the geometrical acceptance of the word: by marking out — the problematic of that apparatus; hence its drama is not merely 'of

vision' but, undercutting that classic narrative transposition, of the relations of cinema's vision and of the demonstration of the terms — including, above all, the woman — of those relations. Stephen Heath, 'The Question Oshima'³

3 Stephen Heath, 'The Question Oshima', *Wide Angle*, vol 2 no 1, 1977, p 51. Further page references to this essay will be included in the text in parenthesis.

For some time now the cinematic apparatus has been under scrutiny by film-makers and theorists. Much of the work around both classical and avant-garde, mainstream or independent cinema has aimed at a marking out of the problematic of the apparatus. But there are problems and there are problems. What I am concerned with here is the problem of identification, of the relation of subjectivity to representation and the inscription of sexual difference, of the positions available to women spectators in film, and the conditions of meaning production, the modalities of spectatorship for women. Heath's claim for Oshima's film, that it 'produces and breaks the apparatus of look and identification', is an important one, suggesting as it does that both are necessary and simultaneously so; both rupture and production of the terms sustaining the relations of 'vision' (image and narrative, then, pleasure and meaning) must occur at once. However, for a film to describe, mark out the problematic of the apparatus is not sufficient to ensure the rupture; nor is the notion sufficient, theoretically, to explain the relation of women spectators to the film's process.

Presents, for example, in setting up the problematic of the apparatus, does demonstrate the relations and the terms of its vision including, above all, the woman as object, ground and support of the representation. Yet in this film, the nexus of look and identification is produced and broken in relation to 'cinema' ('It's all pretty self-referential — referential both to itself and to film in general', says Snow), hence to its spectator as traditionally construed, ie as sexually undifferentiated; and women spectators are placed, as they are by classical cinema, in a zero position, a space of non-meaning. Because the epistemological paradigm which guarantees the subject-object, man-woman dichotomy is still operative here, as it is in classical cinema, *Presents* addresses its disruption of look and identification to a masculine spectator-subject, whose division, like that of the Lacanian subject, takes place in the enunciation, in the sliding of the signifier, in the impossible effort to satisfy the demand, to 'touch' the image (woman), to hold the object of desire and to secure meaning. Spectator identification, here, is with *this* subject, with *this* division, with the masculine subject of enunciation, of the look,

finally with the film-maker.

Asked about his 'use of pin-ups and women's bodies as objects . . . like the page from a girly magazine', in an interview with Jonathan Rosenbaum, Snow responds:

There is that one shot. It seems to stand out in your memory, it's nice, isn't it? (Laughs.)

JR *There are a lot of walking women. But men aren't photographed in the same way that women are.*

MS *No. Should they be? . . . There are so many shots of women, it's really funny when that stands out, because there are some rather elderly ladies, and lots of shots of women doing work of various kinds. It is a panorama, you know, and that aspect of looking at women is important, because I look at women, and so do other men, and so do women.*

Film Comment, May-June 1981, p 37.

The doubt that these three entities — 'I', 'other men', and 'women' — may 'look at women' in different ways does not cross Snow's film; nor does the fact that the eye looking through the lens is not the eye looking at the screen; if the eye that has looked through the camera is a divided, a fallen 'I', it is nevertheless the only source and point of reference of its vision, and the site of any possible spectator identification. In relation to this film, then, women spectators find themselves placed once again in a negative semantic space, between the 'active' look of the camera and the 'passive' image on the screen, a space where, though invested by the cone of light from the projector, they cast no shadow. They are not there.⁴

This is not the least 'present' of the film for feminist theorists: it allows us to understand and to locate with some precision the modalities of inscription of sexual difference in non-feminist avant-garde film-making, and therefore to begin to specify for ourselves how a feminist film practice is in itself a practice of difference, testing, as Kristeva has suggested, 'the two boundaries of language and socialisation': to be 'that which is unspoken' and at the same time to speak 'that which is repressed in discourse'; at once to be *and* to speak, to be *and* to represent, difference, otherness, the elsewhere of language. Hence the magnitude of the stakes women have in cinematic representation and the constant urgency to engage and intervene in man-made cinema. But not to demonstrate the functioning of 'woman' as the support of masculine vision, or 'the production of woman as fetish in a particular

4 In patriarchy, Kristeva has said, 'Fundamentally, women cannot be: the category woman is even that which does not fit into being . . . "Woman" is that which is not represented, that which is unspoken, that which is left out of namings and ideologies'. Interview with *Psychanalyse et Politique*, 1974, transl by Claire Pajczkowska, *m/f*, nos 5/6, 1981, p. 166. See also 'Through the Looking-Glass', in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed by T de Lauretis and S Heath, London, Macmillan, 1980, pp 187-202.

conjuncture of capitalism and patriarchy';⁵ this is no longer the task of feminist critical practice, though it may be crucial to men's work as they attempt to confront the structures of their sexuality, the blind spots of their desire and of their theories.⁶ For even in the most overt gesture of opposition, in the political re-marking of its irreducible difference, the feminist critique is not pure, absolute negativity but rather historically conscious negation; the negation of existing cultural values, of current definitions, and of the terms in which theoretical questions are couched. At a time when increasing numbers of individuals and institutions are staking their claims and asserting their 'rights' to address 'the woman question', it is especially necessary to negotiate the contradiction that threatens feminism from within, pushing it to choose between negativity and positivity, between either unqualified opposition, pure negativity on the one hand, or purely affirmative action in all quarters on the other. To negotiate that contradiction, to keep it going, is to resist the pressure of the binary epistemological model towards coherence, unity and the production of a fixed self/image, a subject-vision, and to insist instead on the production of contradictory points of identification, an elsewhere of vision.

In this sense, the notion of a film working on a problem, 'a problem of "seeing" for the spectator', is a good starting point. But how does a film produce *and* break the apparatus of look and identification? Speaking of a narrative film, and one which deliberately seeks to articulate the sexual, the political and the cinematic in its questioning of vision, Heath indicates that three main issues are involved: narrative, identification, and the shifting of the film's question on to the spectators. I believe that these issues are also involved in avant-garde cinema, for they are central to cinema as a mode of semiotic production.

This order of the look in the work of the film is neither the thematics of voyeurism (note already the displacement of the look's subject from men to women) nor the binding structure of a classic narrative disposition. . . . Its register is . . . that of the edging of every frame, of every shot, towards a problem of 'seeing' for the spectator. (p 51)

In the Realm of the Senses is acutely the film of the impossibility of 'the seen', haunted not by a space 'off' that must and can be unceasingly caught up into a unity, the position of a view for a viewer, but by a 'nothing seen' that drains the images of any full presence, of any adequate view. (p 53)

5 Peter Wollen, 'Manet: Modernism and Avant-Garde', *Screen*, vol 21 no 2 (Summer 1980), p 22.

6 Claire Pajaczowska, 'The Heterosexual Presumption', *Screen*, vol 22 no 1, 1981.

7 'Primary cinematic identification [for Metz] entails not only the spectator's identification with the camera but his identification of himself as the condition of the possibility of what is perceived on the screen. The film viewer, according to Metz, is positioned by the entire cinematic apparatus as the site of an organisation — the viewer lends coherence to the image and is simultaneously posited as a coherent entity. [But] in the realm of artistic practice, identification on the part of the female reader or spectator cannot be, as it is for the male, a mechanism by means of which mastery is assured. On the contrary, if identification is even "provisionally" linked with the woman (as Irigaray does), it can only be seen as re-inforcing her submission', Mary Ann Doane, 'Misrecognition and Identity', *Cine-Tracts*, no 11 [Fall 1980], pp 28 and 30. See also Kaja Silverman 'Masochism and Subjectivity', *Framework*, no 12, 1980 pp 2-9.

That possibility of a 'nothing seen', that uncertainty of vision which Oshima's film poses from within the system of representation it works with, narrative cinema, is not only the question of the film, but the very mechanism which allows that question to be shifted, addressed, put to the spectator. Although Snow's film is not, like Oshima's, narrative in the usual sense of the word, the question of spectatorship — of the ways in which the spectator's view is included, of the spectator's place as it is produced by the film's enunciation and address — is not an impertinent question.

As my reading of *Presents* suggests, the production of meaning, and thus the engagement of subjectivity in the processes of seeing and hearing a film are never wholly outside of narrative, never exempt from the tendency to narrativise, from a culturally ever-present complicity of narrative with meaning. If in classical cinema, it is the logic of narrative that 'orders our memory of the film, our vision' (Heath, p 49), meanings are also produced, according to Barthes, through a rhetoric of the images, with language serving as their anchorage and relay. I will propose that narrativity, perhaps even more than language, insists in our 'ways of seeing', that its logic, its patterns of repetition and difference affect our ordering of sensory 'data' at least as much as the primary rhythms of rhetorical tropes.

Discussing several formulations of cinematic identification, and their implications for female spectatorship, Mary Ann Doane points out that Metz's influential definition of primary cinematic identification, based on the analogy with the mirror stage, in effect excludes women spectators much in the same way classical cinema (or Snow's *Presents*) does; that is to say, it provides the two familiar polarities of identification with the masculine, active gaze and narrative point of view, or with the feminine specular, masochistic position.⁷ Is it accidental, she then asks, 'that Freud's description of identification with respect to the woman frequently hinges on . . . pain, suffering, aggression turned round against the self?' And that 'while in the case of the boy, the super-ego is the relay of identification, in the girl's situation, it is the symptom'? Unlike Metz, Doane goes on to say, Laura Mulvey suggests that primary and secondary identification operate in a common space where they are articulated together: primary, narcissistic identification, which is involved in the constitution of the ego and thus considered to be a precondition for the subject-object relations constituting secondary identification, is in fact 'from the beginning inflected by, overlaid by secondary identification', for the latter depends upon 'the existence of an object "outside" the subject'.

Thus, Doane concludes, the mirror-effect is not a precondition of understanding images, but 'the after-effect of a particular mode of discourse'.⁸

In stating that secondary identification is 'articulated with the father, the super-ego, and the Oedipal complex', Doane does not make an explicit connection between secundarisation and narrative, or narrativity. But I should like to do so and, continuing her argument, propose that any imagistic identification and any reading of the image, including its rhetoric, are 'inflected', 'overlaid' by the oedipal logic of narrativity, are implicated with it through the inscription of desire in the very *movement* of narrative, the unfolding of the Oedipal scenario as *drama* (action). Can it be accidental, I ask, that the semantic structure of all narrative is the movement of an actant-subject toward an actant-object (Greimas), that in fairy tales the object of the hero's quest (action) is 'a *princess* (a sought-for person) and *her father*' (Propp), that the central Bororo myth in Lévi-Strauss' study of over 800 North and South American myths is a variant of the Greek myth of Oedipus? And that even the circus act of the lion and lion tamer is semiotically constructed along a narrative, oedipal trajectory?⁹ In other words, I am proposing that narrativity, because of its inscription of the movement and positionalities of desire, is what mediates the relation of image and language, investing even those forms of 'imagist, sensual, pre-logical thinking' discussed by Eisenstein, or Pasolini's 'complex nexus of significant images [imaginary signifiers?] which pre-figures cinematic communication as its "instrumental" foundation'.¹⁰ For both film-makers and spectators, insofar as they are always historical subjects of signifying practices, images are already, 'from the beginning', implicated with narrative, or overdetermined by it, through its symbolic inscription of desire, as dreams are with secundarisation in analytic practice, and as Lacan's imaginary or Kristeva's semiotic is with the symbolic in actual practices of language. Positions of identification, visual pleasure itself, then, are reached only *après coup*, as after-effects of the engagement of subjectivity in the relations of meaning, which involve image and narrative, primary and secondary processes.

If this is the case, narrative (narrativity) is more than just a code among others employed either cinematically or metacinematically by a film; it is a condition of signification and identification processes, and the very possibility or impossibility of 'seeing' is dependent on it. That Snow's recent work comes back to a referential and representational ('thematic') content, while still

8 Doane, 'Misrecognition and Identity', op cit, pp 31, 29 and 30. The essay by Laura Mulvey referred to is 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, vol 16 no 3 (Autumn 1975), pp 6-18.

9 A-J Greimas, *Sémantique structurale*, Paris, 1966; V Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1968, p 79; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, vol I, New York, 1969; Paul Bouissac, 'Poetics in the Lion's Den: The Circus Act as a Text', *Modern Language Notes*, December 1971, pp 845-857.

10 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo eretico*, Milano: Garzanti, 1972, p 172; see also T de Lauretis, 'Re-reading Pasolini's Essays on Cinema', *Italian Quarterly* (forthcoming). Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, ed and transl by Jay Leyda, New York, 1949, pp 130-131.

concerned with the exploration of specific cinematic codes and their effects on perception (camera movement and speed, image transformation, sound, language, and now also montage), may evidence an awareness of this insistence of narrativity at work in imagistic meaning and of the tendency to narrativise in perception itself. In *Presents* however, that tendency is explored as a mode of production of the film, as a code of cinema, inherent in the material apparatus, and consequently an expressive problem for the film-maker *vis-à-vis* the form and the matter of expression — a struggle of the artist with the angel of his material, so to speak.

Writing on the textual relations between semiotic systems that have spatial structure and semiotic systems that have temporal structure, between the iconic and the verbal registers in a text, Juri M Lotman argues that film narrative is

*a fuller form of the iconic narrative text as it combines the semantic essence of painting with the transformational syntagmatic quality of music. However . . . the question would be simple, or even primitive, if this or that art were automatically to realise the constructive possibilities of its material . . . It is a question of freedom vis-à-vis the material, of those acts of conscious artistic choice that can either preserve the structure of the material or violate it.*¹¹

The specific code of narrative (*fabula* and characters) is taken up self-reflexively, metacinematically, in the staged 'oedipal drama' of *Presents*, where the camera itself is an actor, in fact the protagonist, while the musical (abstract) rhythm of montage in section III struggles precisely against the tendency of (representational) images to make a story by association and contiguity. Yet the narrative 'meanings' set up by the prior two sections are not to be dispelled. Would they be, without those sections? Probably not. As J Hoberman notes, 'close-ups of heart surgery or a woman's pubic area are bound to have more impact than shots of cars or trees, no matter how frantically the camera is jiggling. *Presents* doesn't dehierarchise its images, it trivialises them'.¹² What the film, finally, demonstrates is the grand illusion of a non-illusionist cinema so dear to some sectors of the avant-garde, and the ideological weight of a purely 'materialist' cinema.

While the importance of Snow's work on perception and cinematic codes is not to be diminished by what that work does not do, other recent films have taken on cinematic representation as a production of meaning for the spectators, posing the prob-

11 J M Lotman, 'The Discrete Text and the Iconic Text: Remarks on the Structure of Narrative', *New Literary History*, Winter 1975, p 337.

12 'Snow Drift', *The Village Voice*, April 22-28, 1981, p 48.

lem of seeing not as one of expressive modalities, a problem of 'art', but as a questioning of identification and subject identity. It is not by chance that such films, whether independently or commercially distributed, mainstream or avant-garde, work with and against narrative, and that for them, as for Oshima's film, 'the question lies in the articulation of the sexual, the political and the cinematic, and in the impossibilities discovered in the process of such an articulation' (p 48).

One of those 'impossibilities', perhaps the most serious for feminism, is that while no 'positive images' of woman can be produced by simple role reversal or any thematics of liberation, while no direct representation of desire can be given except in the terms of the oedipal, masculine-feminine polarity, it is only through narrative that the questions of identification, of the place and time of women spectators in the film can be addressed. I do not mean narrative in the narrow sense of story (*fabula* and characters) or logical structure (actions and actants), but in the broader sense of discourse conveying the temporal movement and positionalities of desire, be they written, oral or filmic narrative forms: the case history, the postcard in *Sigmund Freud's Dora*, pornographic literature and sentimental novels read aloud in *Salò* and *Song of the Shirt* respectively; strictly coded narrative genres such as opera and film noir in *Thriller*, the 'news story' in *Realm of the Senses*, myth in *Riddles of the Sphinx*, porno films and TV commercials in *Dora*, science fiction in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (or less so: philosophical writing in *Salò*, the political mythology of Nazi-Fascism in *The Night Porter*, historical and journalistic writing in *Song of the Shirt*, medical-juridical discourse in *Bad Timing*), as well as filmic narration in its voice-over, synch-sound and other varieties. Each of these films engages a number of narrative discourses dispersed across the text, showing their congruence and co-operation in the general 'deployment of sexuality', as Foucault calls it, of which cinema is one institutionalised technology.

The privileged position of cinema (and television or, to a lesser extent, photography) in that deployment, and therefore in the constitution of social subjects, has to do with what used to be called the referentiality of the image, its direct or analogical 'impression of reality', which today, in a post-structuralist or, better, post-semiological climate, is more accurately understood as an imagistic representation. The fascination with the human body, documented by film historians and guaranteed by sponsors

- 13 'It is through sex — in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality — that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility . . . to the whole of his body . . . to his identity', Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, New York, Random House, 1980, pp 155-156.

and producers, is explained by Foucault's hypothesis of sexuality as an 'implantation' of pleasures in the body, which sustains the social network of power relations.¹³ As a direct result of the historical formation of sexuality, then, the imagistic representation of the body, cinema's gift of visual pleasure, is a focal point of any process of identification, exerting a pull on the spectator comparable only to the tension of narrativity. The scandalous pleasures afforded by Marlene Dietrich in top hat and tails performing Maurice Chevalier to Cary Grant's audience in *Blonde Venus*, Tim Curry's drag in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Richard Gere's American Gigolo or, more subtly, David Bowie's alien body in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and the more overtly ideological insistence of Pasolini's camera on Terence Stamp's trousers in *Teorema* are perhaps no more than minor violations of the standard code of spectatorship; but they have disrupted it to a degree if seeing again *Ben Hur* (1959), for example, we notice with surprise the insistence of Wyler's camera on Charlton Heston's bare midriff and legs.

This is usually countered by the (masculine) objection that 'feminising' the male body does not alter the polarity by which the body is desired, can be *seen*, only as female. The objection comes from the terms in which phallic desire is constructed, its requirements of disavowal, hence for cinema, voyeurism and fetishism; but I do not think it holds outside of that construction. I do not think it holds any interest for a feminist understanding of desire or identification. A more interesting objection would be that those representations of the body, like the 'nude' of Snow's film, are not pure images, pure imaginary, but already implicated in narrativity, thus overdetermined by certain positionalities of desire, a certain placing of identification. Which is why it is not androgyny that we read in Tommy/David Bowie's body but the signified of a sexual difference not reducible to the terms of a phallic or oedipal polarity; it is not homosexuality that we read in Dietrich's body, look and gesture, but the simultaneous presence of the two positionalities of desire, the masculine (in her drag performance) and the feminine (in her other acts as dancer, mother and 'lost woman'), perversely and hilariously brought together in her ape-suit act. For the same reason, simple role reversals do not work as well. The body of John Travolta in *Moment by Moment* is not disturbing or exciting, merely another pretty body on the Malibu scene; it even lacks the imaginary possibility, explicitly contained in the narrative of *American*

Gigolo, that the function of a man's body may be nothing more (and nothing less!) than to give pleasure to women.

It is in the play of these two tensions, image and narrative, not just one or the other, that the spectator's subjectivity is engaged, in the two-fold pull of a film's imaging, body and meaning. If the masculine-feminine polarity can be disrupted to open other spaces for identification, other positionalities of desire, the work of the film should be on these problems: how to address the spectator from an elsewhere of vision, how to construct a different narrative temporality, how to position the spectator and the film-maker not at the centre but at the borders of the oedipal stage.



Carl Andre Hollis Frampton

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MARY KELLY

RE-VIEWING MODERNIST CRITICISM

ALTHOUGH THE PHENOMENON of the temporary exhibition first made its appearance in the 19th century, it was only in the post-war period that it became the most prominent form of entertainment and tuition in the visual arts. The ascendancy of the temporary exhibition, notably the Annuals, Biennials, theme shows and historical surveys, indicated a significant shift in the system of patronage from the private sector to institutions funded by the state. This change coincided with an expansion in the art publishing industry, renewed emphasis on the practice of reviewing and the sanctioning of art criticism as an academic discipline. These occurrences, their points of intersection and divergence, establish the framework for an analysis of the effects and limitations of modernist criticism in particular. In this article, modernism is defined as a determinant discursive field with reference to critical writing since 1945. It is maintained that modernist discourse is produced at the level of the statement, by the specific practices of art criticism, by the art activities implicated in the critic/author's formulations and by the institutions which disseminate and disperse the formulations as events. An analysis of the formation and transformation of statements in this field is very much needed, but it is beyond the scope of the introductory issues being raised here. However, it is hoped that by identifying the persistent themes of that discourse, pointing out its diversions, describing the process of its modification at a particular moment and making proposals for the construction of a different object in the domain of criticism at the present time, a space will be opened for future work.

The pictorial paradigm

- 1 Peter Wollen, 'Photography and Aesthetics', *Screen*, Winter 1978/9, vol 19, no 4, note 22, p 27. However, in the context of this article, it would be more problematic to follow Wollen's suggestion that 'the category "avant-garde" is best reserved for works which prolong and deepen the historic rupture of cubism', since, regardless of oppositional intentions, works are continually being recaptured by a reflexive criticism. It would be maintained here that the 'rupture of Cubism' does not constitute a continuous discourse, ie, a set of persistent themes and objects in transformation, it is relative to a particular instance, consequently, contemporary art practices cannot prolong it, they must re-invent it.

In a note to the article 'Photography and Aesthetics', Peter Wollen remarks 'The category of "modernism" has increasingly been captured by those who see twentieth-century art primarily in terms of reflexivity and ontological exploration'.¹ If it is possible to define this capture in other terms as the predominance of a particular discourse within the hierarchy of discourses which constitute modernism as a discursive field, then more exactly the effectivity of that discourse can be described as the production of a norm for pictorial representation which does not necessarily correspond to definite pictures, but rather to a set of general assumptions concerning 'Modern Art'. Further, if these assumptions are not seen to be based on the consensus of a homogenous mass audience of art viewers, but formed within calculated practices of reviewing, publishing and exhibiting art for a specific public, then the reading of artistic texts is always in some sense subjected to the determining conditions of these practices, crucially those of criticism. Here at least two preliminary points can be made about the way in which modernist criticism functions as a practice, that is, the rules it deploys in forming these general assumptions as a network of themes which construct definite objects and a system of strategic choices which also permit their modification.

Firstly, the normalisation of a mode of representation always entails the marginalisation of an alternative set of practices and discourses; for instance, Sam Hunter, hailing the rise of Abstract Expressionism in *Art Since 1945*, claimed that almost every other art practice at that time — geometric abstraction as well as romantic realism and surrealism, was an 'exception rather than the rule'.² But marginalisation is not simply a matter of chronological displacement or exclusion. It can also be effected by incorporation. In a passage written later in 1968 for an exhibition entitled 'New Directions in American Painting', Hunter referred an even wider area of emergent artistic practices back to the ontological norm:

- 2 Sam Hunter, chapter on the United States in *Art since 1945*, Washington Square Press, New York, 1958.

When the contemporary artist moves towards the object, the world of packaged mass culture or even towards formal purification, critical problems of artistic choice remain and compromise his most apparently anonymous productions. The idea of the work of art as an uncertain and problematic act of continual creation, filtered through a temperament and retaining evidence in

its final form of that passage, was one of the central contributions of Abstract Expressionism.³

The modernist discourse constructs the category of the artistic text. It must demonstrate pictoriality without radical purification, retain the evidence of a passage without imposing the problem of interpretation, filter a temperament without reference to social constraints. It is *pre-eminently 'expressive' and primarily given at the level of the 'picture'*. Those practices, particularly those anonymous productions which do not in some sense conform to the unity, the homogeneity of the pictorial paradigm and express the essential creativity of the artistic subject are not merely marginal; they are not art!

Secondly, despite incompatible practices or divisions in the discourse, modernism's central themes persist. The current revival of painting (neo-expressionism, new imagism, energism) and the coincident dispersal of narrative, conceptual and social purpose art gives some indication of the political consequences of artistic choices founded on a re-appropriation of modernist themes. It also implies that the designations 'avant-garde' and more recently 'post-movement', 'post-modernist' and 'trans-avant-garde' express nothing more than a desire to break through the circuitous logic of a discourse which demands experiment but nevertheless compels repetition. They reiterate the attempt to find a possible position, although it may be represented as a forbidden place, at the limit of the discourse.

Within the specific institutions and discourses of Fine Art, the category of 'Modern Art' occupies a place comparable in its centrality to that of the classic narrative film in the domain of cinema. This suggests it is not possible to pose the problem of realism unilaterally across the entire range of representational practices, from film, video and photography to diverse forms of painting, sculpture and performance art. The discursive operations which inform them are determined by different historical circumstances.

As Wollen also points out, one of the responses to the advances in photographic techniques was for painting to embrace a Kantian perspective and emphasise the subjective and the intuitive.⁴ This response linked photographic history with the apparatus and associated technological progress with the evolutionary perfection of seeing. In contrast it claimed that art was invented with the first graphic expression of the human hand and that artistic production

3 Sam Hunter, from the catalogue of the exhibition *New Directions in American Painting, The Poses* Institute of Fine Arts, Brandeis University, 1963.

4 Peter Wollen, *op cit*, p 10.

5 See Jean-Louis Schefer, *Split colour/blur*, trans Paul Smith, *20th Century-Studies*, December 1976, no 15/16, issue on Visual Poetics.

concerned a timeless refinement of feeling in the field of the look. This representation of essential differences, between sight and insight, between the filmed event and the painted mark, has also produced at the level of concrete practices, a radical asymmetry in their respective modes of address. What is unfeasible for the narrative film is practicable, indeed, imperative for modernist painting — that is, the subjective image. While in the former, the cinematic apparatus is employed to remove the traces of its own steps, in the latter, the painterly signifier is manipulated precisely to trace a passage, to give evidence of an essentially human action, to mark the subjectivity of the artist in the image itself. It is above all the artistic gesture which constitutes, at least metaphorically, the imaginary signifier of 'Modern Art'.

Why gesture? Of all the painterly signifiers, why is gesture the privileged term of the pictorial paradigm? If signifying function is a property of figure, then colour for instance is too elusive, it never really accedes to the signifier but remains, as Schefer describes it 'the difference in the field where "it" is found'.⁵

Gesture, on the other hand, even the most minimal action, retains a certain residue of figuration. The play of presence and absence within the pictorial space turns on gesture; its materialisation sustaining texture, matter; its dematerialisation transporting colour, light, to the field of the signifier. Modernist painting, expressive abstraction in particular, foregrounds precisely this production of the signifier, but it would be unfounded, consequently, to suppose that this practice implies a deconstruction, a violation or transgression of the pictorial space. Clement Greenberg referred to Jackson Pollock's overall paintings as the 'domestication of wild things', what he called the 'look of accident' and the 'look of the void'. Thus gesture however agitated, excessive or evasive is immobilised and mastered by the frame, brought to heel by the authority of that inevitable edge. Moreover, abstraction's apparent liberation of gesture from the figurative constraints of perspectival representation renders even more exactly the imaginary effect of a transcendental *chiaroscuro* whereby the spectator recognises, in the mark of the enouncing subject, an essential humanness, smoothly eliding the look of the artist, that unique vision, with his own, assuming in that image an essential creativity which authenticates his experience as aesthetic and and validates the object as art.

Gesture is the term which the proponents of modernism cannot afford (literally in the financial sense) to efface. In the 1960s, when the 'avant-garde' expelled gesture, denied expression, con-



... the painterly signifier.

Jackson Pollock, No 5, 1950

tested the notion of an essential creativity, the spectator was called upon to sustain a certain loss: the presence (or rather, presentified absence) of the artistic subject. The dealer, too, was threatened with a deficit: the authenticating mark which figures so prominently in the art market's peculiar structure of desire and exchange. It is not only a particular work of art which is purchased (the title), but also 'something' by a unique individual which is possessed (the name). That 'something', the object's investment with artistic subjectivity, is secured by gesture, or more explicitly, a signature.

The legal subject according to Edelman (in Hirst and Kingdom's exposition), is presupposed as possessor of itself.⁶ In terms of

⁶ Paul Hirst and Elizabeth Kingdom, 'On Edelman's Ownership of the Image', *Screen*, Winter 1979/80, vol 20, no 3/4, pp 135-140.

7 Sam Hunter,
op cit, p 326.

8 See Bernard Edelman, *Ownership of the Image, Elements for a Marxist Theory of Law*, trans Elizabeth Kingdom, introduction Paul Q Hirst, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979. It is also relevant to note here that the position of artists in Great Britain under the present 1956 Copyright Act (amended in 1971) is not much improved. For example, a sculptor or equivalent can only get protection under the law if he or she can prove that the production of the work involves 'craftsmanship' and constituted more than 'machining of parts'. See Richard Mann, 'British Copyright Council', *Artists Union Journal*, August 1980.

the law, man's freedom follows from his self-possession, thus he has the right to acquire property, moreover he is his own property. For the artist to sell his painterly property (products) or his labour (as in performance) is merely a confirmation of his freedom. The legal interpellation of the creative subject coincides dramatically with its 'imaginary' construction in the critical discourses of modernism. One is reminded again of Hunter writing on the abstract expressionists, 'they argue that only the artistic self which is certain of its identity, since it knows that its existence can be proved through an act of creation is able to be free'.⁷ At one level it could be said that what is bought in the form of the art object is a commodity; but because, as Hirst and Kingdom put it, the law posits the subject in the form of a commodity, ie man's freedom consists of putting himself in circulation, at another level it could be suggested that what is desired and exchanged is an originary creativity and above all an exemplary act of human freedom. It is necessary to include in the modernist determinants of the efficacious artistic text; not only self-definition, but also crucially, the self-possession of the artistic subject. Thus the work of art, filtered through the institutions and discourses that determine its specific conditions of existence, produces artistic authorship in the fundamental form of the bourgeois subject; creative, autonomous and proprietorial. In a sense there is no 'alternative' to that passage; for the very moment that the work of art enters into circulation it is sanctioned by law as the property of a creative subject(but not to enter into such contract would be to forfeit even the possibility that the artistic text, in the process of its construction of meaning, could indeed interrogate that form).

It is relevant here to point to Edelman's 'paradox of photography' for the law of property in the 19th century, which ascertained that the image could only be property to the extent that it was mixed with subject, that is, re-presented and transformed through his creative labour.⁸ Although it can now be legally maintained that 'a creative subject and his purpose is installed behind the camera', this does not mean that it is generally sanctioned within the traditional institutions and discourses of Fine Art. Artistic practices employing film or photography as well as those using found objects, processes or systems where creative labour is apparently absent, continue to problematise the transcendental imperatives which predominate in critical and historical literature on art.

Criticism's function is to initiate that work which Art History

eventually accomplishes in the form of the 'biographic narrative' that is, as Griselda Pollock describes it 'the production of an artistic subject for works of art'.⁹ The critic's dilemma is the production of artistic subjects for works of art at a time when their authenticity (and market value) are still tentative. Modernist criticism became particularly precarious when it concerned the installation of creative purposes behind objects which were recalcitrant to such efforts or even, in the case of some conceptual work, absent altogether.

The crisis of artistic authorship

Greenberg's writing is often cited as the apodictic core of modernist criticism; but it is far from coherent. Rather, it marks a point of diffraction, of incoherence in that discourse. His particular attention to the materiality of the object allowed a divergence from the ontological norm which was furthered by developments of art practice and which, consequently, required a re-statement of modernism's central themes at a moment when the the vacuity of that project was keenly perceived in contrast to the aims and intentions of some of the artists to whom he referred.

In *Photography, Phantasy, Function*, Victor Burgin summarises Greenberg's definition of Modernism as 'the tendency of an art practice toward self-reference by means of a foregrounding of: the tradition of the practice; the difference of the practice from other (visual arts) practices; the 'cardinal norms' of the practice; the material substrate, or 'medium' of the practice'.¹⁰ At first, Greenberg appears to be ignoring the ontological imperative to self-expression by insisting on a self-referential art, and at the same time avoiding the pictorial constraints of that discourse by emphasising the specificity and diversity of art forms. But, in fact, his proposal for a scientific, neo-Kantian aesthetics of the art object is founded exclusively on the practice of painting. Sculpture's requisite three-dimensionality, for instance, is forever haunted by the spectre of resemblance to ordinary things. With respect to photography, Burgin points out Greenberg's dilemma; to insist on the materiality of the print would be to undermine its founding attribute, that of illusion. Even painting, if it is illusionistic, according to Greenberg only uses art to conceal art. Hence it is not simply painting, but abstraction in particular, which is purely pictorial, essentially optical, uniquely flat and capable of complete self-reference.

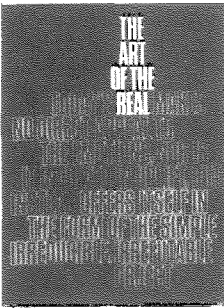
In *Modernist Painting* Greenberg claimed that 'visual art should

9 Griselda Pollock, 'Artists, Mythologies and Media-Genius, Madness and Art History', *Screen*, vol 21, no 3, pp 58-59.

10 Victor Burgin, 'Photography, Phantasy, Function', *Screen*, Spring 1980, vol 21, no 1, p 23. See also Burgin's critique of Greenberg in 'Modernism in the Work of Art', *20th Century Studies*, December 1976, no 15/16.

- 11 Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', *Art Year Book* no 4, 1961, in *The New Art*, Gregory Battcock (ed), New York, 1973, p. 74.

- 12 See cover, Catalogue for the exhibition *Art of the Real*, American Painting and Sculpture 1948-1968, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1968, the Tate Gallery, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1969.



- 13 Clement Greenberg, 'Art After Abstract Expressionism', *Art International*, vol VI, no 8, October 25th 1962, p 30.

- 14 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans J H Bernardo, Hafner Publishing

confine itself to what is given in visual experience and make no reference to any other orders of experience'.¹¹ But when the canons of self-criticism, self-definition and self-reference were rigorously applied in so-called 'minimal art', Greenberg rejected their implications. The aesthetics of 'utter flatness' had gone too far; it was verging on a kind of existential recumbency, tending towards a condition of 'non-art'. For instance, where the catalogue *The Art of the Real* 1968 stated, 'The art of the today's real makes no direct appeal to the emotions, nor is it involved with uplift, but instead offers itself in the form of the irreducible, irrefutable object',¹² it meant that the pictorial space was threatened with extinction by the encroachment of shapefulness and impending 'objecthood'. Consequently, Greenberg made a significant qualification. In *After Abstract Expressionism* he said 'The question now asked . . . is no longer what constitutes art or the art of painting, but what irreducibly constitutes *good* art as such.'¹³

Thus Greenberg's attempt to establish the objective purposiveness of the art object, to define its particular forms of adaption to definite ends in terms of material substrate, is continually undermined by the exigencies of a subjective judgment of *taste*. And here an altogether different order of purpose emerges. The only necessary condition for *judging* good art is common sense; but for *producing* good art, genius is required. With reference to Kant's *Critique*, genius is the mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art. No definite rule can be given for the products of genius, hence originality is its first property.¹⁴ At this point the modernist discourse emerges as the site of an insistent contradiction; indicated in Greenberg's criticism and repeated in the opposing strategies of the institutions of education on the one hand and those of entertainment and art patronage on the other. The former exacts a formal field of knowledge about art, an empirical domain of teachable crafts; while the latter requires a transcendental field of aesthetic experience and reflection founded on the unteachable tenets of *genius* and originality. During the 1960s artistic practices attempted to repudiate the notions of genius, originality and taste, by introducing material processes, series, systems and ideas in place of an art based on self-expression. Some artists maintained that it was necessary to purge the modernist programme of such obsolete philosophical presumptions in order to refine its fundamental argument for an exclusively self-referential art. Joseph Kosuth

pāint'ing, n. 1. the act or occupation of covering surfaces with paint.
 2. the act, art, or occupation of picturing scenes, objects, persons, etc. in paint.
 3. a picture in paint, as an oil, water color, etc.
 4. colors laid on. [Obs.]
 5. delineation that raises a vivid image in the mind; as, word-painting. [Obs.]

... the linguistic analogy.

Joseph Kosuth, *Art as Ideas as Art*, 1967

for instance, following Greenberg's initiative and taking up Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions, insisted that works of art were analytic propositions: 'The propositions of art are not factual, but linguistic in character, that is, they do not describe the behaviour of physical or even mental objects; they express definitions of art, or the formal consequences of definitions of art'.¹⁵

The limitations of proposing the linguistic analogy are numerous but primarily concern the fact that images, unlike words, are not doubly articulated. Verbal language is the only signifying system which has the ability to analyse itself. Hence the work of art, with reference to its internal structure, does not possess the means of defining itself as art. This is not to say that unless the artistic text includes a written message, it inhabits a realm of extra-discursive, 'purely visual' determinations; rather that the text is informed by discursive operations at the level of its conception, production and reception in a way which is neither prior to, nor derived from, but coincident with, language. However this suggests an area of investigation which Kosuth's positivism does not allow. The significance of his refinement of formalism lies in the problem it poses in the domain of aesthetic judgment. In place of the ever-widening spiral of connotations imposed by taste, the linguistic analogy proposes the denotative reading of artistic texts. Artistic practices which are based on such assumptions, however Edenic, as Barthes describes the desire for a radically objective or innocent image, nevertheless contested the unique

Company, New York, 1951, First Part, Second Book, *Analytic of the Sublime*, p 150-153.

- 15 Joseph Kosuth, 'Art After Philosophy I & II' *Studio International* October and November 1969, reprinted in *Idea Art*, ed Gregory Battcock, E P Dutton & Co, New York 1973, p 84. Cf Thierry Kuntzel, and Bernar Venet, *Lecture de Representation graphique de la fonction y = -x²/4* (Arthur Hubschmid, Paris 1975). They also emphasise the linguistic character of art not as an analogy but as an alternative practice. Using Jacques Bertin's semiology, they propose a denotative art based on the graphic image (monosemy) in place of the prevailing ambiguity (polysemy) of pictorial representation.

- 16' Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, June 1967, reprinted in *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock, Studio Vista, London 1969, pp 143-146.

17 *ibid*, p 124.

identity, the authorial status, of the art object. Critical discourse, on the contrary, continually shifts to recuperate its lost investment in the transcendental field; namely, artistic subjectivity.

When, in 'Art and Objecthood'¹⁶ Michael Fried maintained that a successful painting was capable of 'compelling conviction', he took Greenberg's commonsense notion of 'good art' and elevated it from the realm of opinion to that of faith (art which is compatible with the morality of the viewer?). Conviction, however, demands more than a self-defining art object, more than the mechanical product of genius; it requires a level of artistic decision, of choice. Fried insisted that the task of the modernist painter was to discover those conventions which at a given moment alone were capable of establishing his work's identity as painting (he writes, 'what constitutes the art of painting and what constitutes good painting, are no longer separable'. The rule of art (material substrate) and the rule of nature (genius) are reconciled within the modernist discourse, as in the Kantian dialectic, by posting a supersensible substrate of artistic freedom.

With minimalism's eradication of the painterly signifier, exactly how did the modernist critic establish an authentic presence for specific works of art? Firstly, there was the phenomenological insistence on the pure act of perception, an attempt to rescue authenticity as a kind of mechanical after-effect of the *gestalt*. Fried suggested that presence could be conferred by size or by 'the look of non-art'. The look of non-art was precisely the pictorial frame, extended to include the entire situation; variables of the object, light, space and crucially the spectator's body. Awareness of size or scale, as Robert Morris maintained, was a function of the comparison made between one's body size and the object — and again according to Fried this process of comparison extorted a special complicity from the viewer. 'Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he takes it seriously — and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of it'.¹⁷

Secondly, establishing the identity, the authorial status of the art object became increasingly dependent on an extended documentation of the installation or of the artist-at-work, and on critical commentary including statements by the artist. What cannot be reduced to pictures on the gallery wall can nevertheless be reproduced as pictures in the pages of a book.

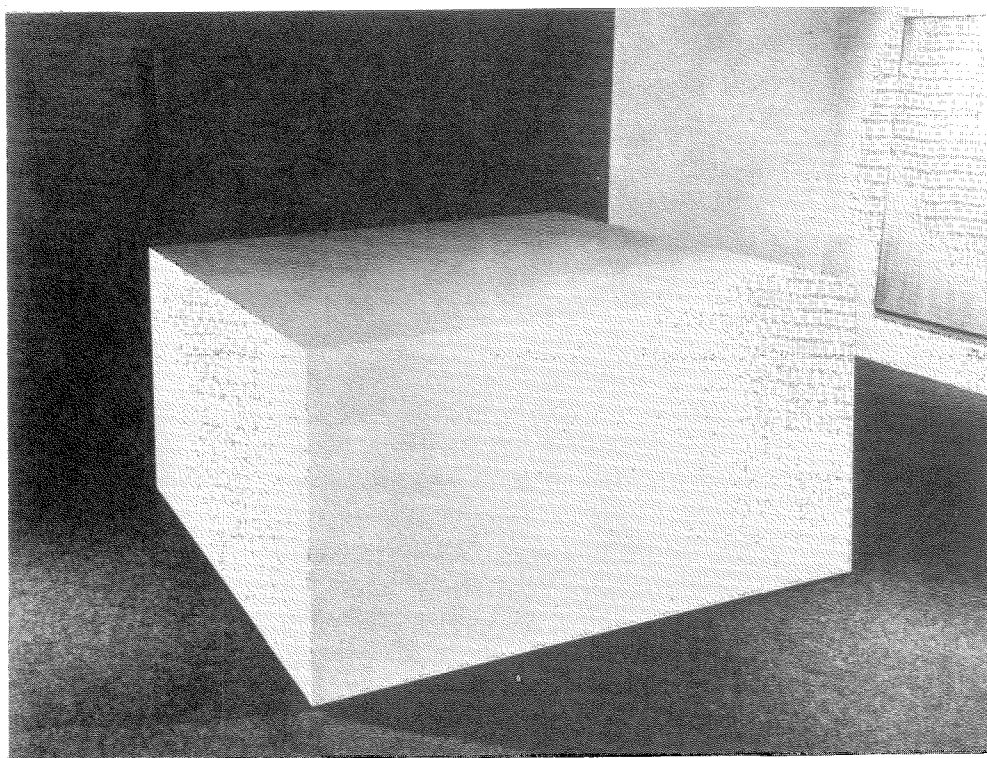
Although Fried referred to the minimal object as having 'stage

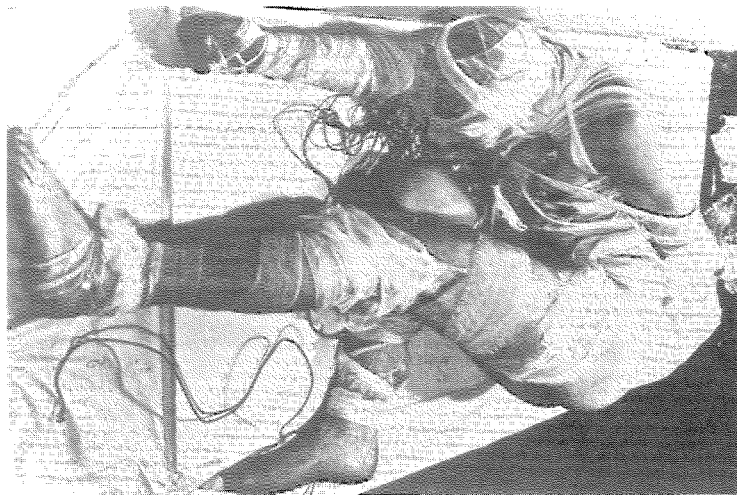
presence', in effect it remained no more than a prop without the intervention of the actor/artist and his script. Ultimately, it became both necessary and expedient for the artist to stage himself; necessary because it was logically bound up with the interrogation of the object, and expedient because at the same time it rescued a semblance of propriety for ephemeral art forms.

The unity, the homogeneity of the pictorial space was disrupted by an insistence on temporality and by the intrusion of non-self-referential contents (the return of the repressed synthetic proposition); but what was evacuated at the level of the signifying substance of creative labour (gesture, matter, colour) — signifiers of an unique artistic presence, reappeared in the figure of the artist; *his* person, *his* image, *his* gestures. As early as 1965, Rudolf Schwarzkofler stated that his performance 'Aktionen' made its appearance 'in place of pictures executed by hand'. The insertion of the artist's body within this new pictorial space had nothing to do with the traditional constraints of the artistic nude re-presented as information or spectacle but, as Schwarzkofler insisted, it concerned the 'total nude . . . [a transcendental nudity?]

. . . the irreducible object.

Robert Morris, untitled, 1964





... the irrefutable experience of pain Rudolf Schwarzkogler, *Action*, 1965

which places itself above the senses through the various possibilities of its repetitive gestures and its repetitive presences'.¹⁸ In performance work it is no longer a question of investing the object with an artistic presence: the artist is present and creative subjectivity is given as the effect of an essential self-possession, that is, of the artist's body and his inherent right of disposition over it.

Furthermore, there is what could be described as the peculiar paradox of photography for the precarious art practices of the late 1960s and early 1970s. That is to say, what remains of performance, with its temporality, its specific relation of audience and event impossible to trace, is the film or the photograph. What is lost in *that* image, in so far as it can no longer be emphatically marked as the property of the creative subject, is gained to the extent that it is, precisely, a photograph of the artist and as the possessive subject (in law) he has 'the right of the photographed' over the disposal of his own image. More importantly, what is taken away from the pictorial text — the painterly signifier of bodily gesture, is given back in photographic form as the visible body, its peculiar gestures acceding to the status of the signifier in another space, that of pictorial quotation.

Benjamin's 'aura' may wither away in the age of mechanical reproduction but authenticity remains. What is made more explicit, more transparent, by the so-called 'dematerialisation' of the object, is that *the production of authenticity requires more than an author for the object; it exacts the 'truth' of the authorial discourse.*

By putting himself in circulation, the performance artist

18 Rudolf Schwarzkogler, 'Panorama Manifesto I/II The Total Nude' 1965, in *Il Corpo Come Linguaggio*, Giampaolo Prearo Editors, Milan, 1974.

parodied the commercial exchange and distribution of an artistic personality in the form of a commodity. Nevertheless, for criticism, performance art initiated an appropriate synthesis of the disparate elements that had fractured the modernist discourse. On the one hand it provided the empirical domain with a universal object — the body, and on the other, to the transcendental field, it brought the incontestable authenticity of the artist's experience of his own body.

With Lea Vergine's account of 'body art', *Il Corpo Come Linguaggio*, criticism seems to subside once again in the direction of ontology. She speaks of 'the individual obsessed by the obligation to exhibit himself in order to be'.¹⁹ But she is anxious to point out that this move is more than a revival of Expressionism. The use of the body in art is not simply a return to origins, 'the individual is lead back to a specific mode of existence'. Moreover these activities, 'phenomena' as she puts it, also document a style of living that remains 'outside of art'. The critic finds in the analysis of the artist's *actual experience*, the third term which metaphorically grounds the experience of nature (the body) and art (the culture). In *Art Povera*, Germano Celant's artist-alchemist mixes himself with environment, 'he has chosen to live within direct experience, no longer the representative, he aspires to live, not see'.²⁰ According to Michel Foucault, modern thought is a radical constestation of both positivism and eschatology: it searches for a discourse neither in the order of a reduction nor in the order of a promise. It is precisely a discourse which constitutes the subject as the locus of a knowledge empirically acquired but always referred back to what makes it possible and finds in the analysis of actual experience a third term in which both the experience of the body and of the culture can be seen to be grounded.²¹

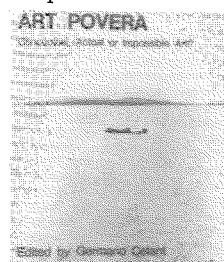
Throughout the 1970s, the critics who identified their project with the 'avant-garde' effectively modernised Greenberg's archaic classicism. Significantly, Vergine quotes not Kant but Husserl:

*Among the bodies of this nature that is reduced to what belongs to me, I discover my own body. It can be distinguished from all other bodies because of but a single particular: it is the only body that is not simply a body, but also my body. It is the only body that exists inside the strata of abstraction that I have chiselled into the world in which, in accordance with experience, I co-ordinate fields of sensation in various ways.*²²

- 19 Lea Vergine,
*Il Corpo Come
Linguaggio*,
op cit, p 3.



- 20 Germano Celant,
Art Povera,
Studio Vista,
London 1969,
p 225.



- 21 Michael Foucault,
*The Order of
Things*, Tavistock
Publications,
London, 1970,
pp 320-321.

- 22 Husserl, quoted in
Lea Vergine, op
cit, p 21 cf
Edmund Husserl,
*Cartesian
Meditations*,
Martinus Nijhoff,
The Hague, 1977,
p 97.

23 *ibid*, p 5.

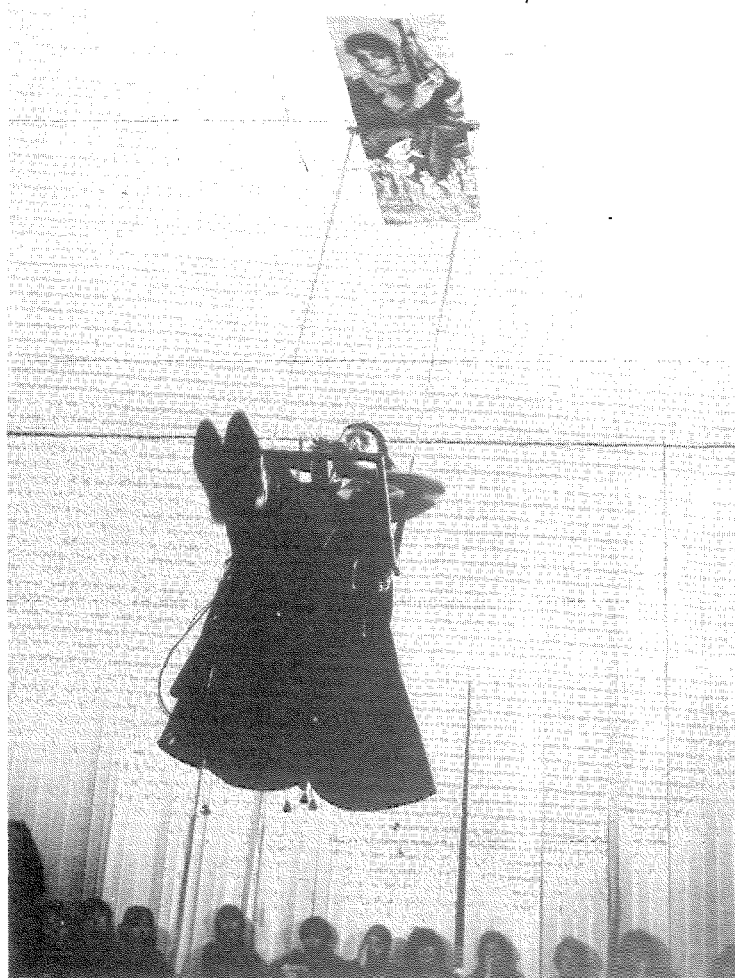
- 24 Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman, 'Textual Strategies: the Politics of Art Making', *Screen*, Summer 1980, vol 21, no 2, pp 37-38.

- 25 Ulrike Rosenbach, *Körpersprache*, Haus am Waldsee, Berlin 1975. As regards the hermeneutic image, for instance in *Salto Mortale*, Rosenbach poses on a swing (posing the theme of the enigma) and aims the video camera at the ceiling where two different representations of woman have been posted: a photograph of the Palestinian commando, Leila Khaled, and a reproduction of a painting by Lochner of a madonna and child. Then she swings below them, showing first one image, then the other, on the video monitor (formulating the enigma as a question) 'which is the true one?' The answer is delayed, she continues to swing. Then she stops suspended

Similarly the authenticity of body art cannot be inscribed at the level of a particular morphology, it must be chiselled into the world in accordance with direct experience. The discourse of the body in art is more than a repetition of the eschatological voices of Abstract Expressionism; the actual experience of the body fulfils the prophecy of the painted mark. It is also more than a confirmation of the positivist aspirations of the *Art of the Real*. The art of the 'real body' does not pertain to the truth of a visible form, but refers back to its essential content: the irreducible, irrefutable experience of *pain*. The body, as artistic text, bears the authenticating imprint of pain like a signature, Vergine insists, 'the experiences we are dealing with are authentic, and they are consequently cruel and painful. Those who are in pain will tell you that they have the right to be taken seriously'²³ (it is no longer a question of good art, but of serious artists).

Here, it is relevant to note Judith Barry and Sandy Flitterman's observations with regard to the performances of Gina Pane. They maintain that by counterposing an 'aesthetics of pain' to one of pleasure, the artist merely reinforces the dualistic bias of Western metaphysics and that particularly, by practicing self-mutilation in her art, a woman invokes the traditional representation of female masochism.²⁴ Quite rightly, they point out that this type of art practice is not necessarily in opposition to the dominant discourse of art. However, it seems to be more a matter of phenomenology than metaphysics: an aesthetics of lived experience, rather than pain specifically, is being counterposed to that of the object, and not to pleasure as such. In this case, pain is not opposed to pleasure but becomes a privileged signifier in the field of sensations which the artist co-ordinates in the name of self-expression. Pane's art addresses not the sexual body but the Husserlian body, discovered as what belongs to me, my body, the body of the self-possessing artistic subject whose guarantee of truth is grounded in the painful state.

Alternatively, the specific contribution of feminists in the field of performance has been to pose the question of sexual difference across the discourse of the body in a way which focuses on the construction not of the individual, but of the sexed subject. The body is not perceived as the repository of an artistic essence: it is *seen* as a kind of hermeneutic image, the enigma of femininity — formulated as the problem of representation (images of women, how to change them) and resolved by the discovery of a true identity behind the patriarchal facade — 'the essence in women'



... the hermeneutic image.

Ulrike Rosembach, *Salto Mortale*, 1978

according to Ulrike Rosenbach, who defines feminist art as 'the elucidation of the woman-artist's identity; of her body, of her psyche, her feelings, her position in society'.²⁶

Clearly the question of the body and the question of sexuality do not necessarily intersect.²⁶ When they do, for instance in this particular discourse, the body is decentred and it is radically split; positioned; not simply *my* body, but *his* body, *her* body. Here, no third term emerges to salvage a transcendental sameness for aesthetic reflection. Within this system of representation, actual experience merely confirms an irrevocable difference in the field of the other.

Partially because of this intransigence, feminist art has been

between the two possibilities (leaving the spectator in suspense). Finally, she turns upside down revealing her own image on the monitor — filmed in a mirror below with the light and camera concealed under her skirt. Thus she proposes an answer: reject existing models, trust yourself, 'discover the true feminine structure behind the facade erected by patriarchal thinking' (the enigma resolved). See also catalogue for the exhibition *feministische kunst internationaal*, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague 1979, pp 98-99, 103-104.



²⁶ See Beverly Brown and Parveen Adams, 'The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics, *M/F*, no 3, 1979.

problematic for criticism; how does the critic authenticate the work of art when the author is sexed and 'his' truth no longer universal? Consequently most of this work has been marginalised by or excluded from the so-called 'mainstream' even when the critic's concerns have included areas such as psychoanalysis (Vergine's book is an obvious case in point). Moreover the predominant forms of feminist writing on art continue to counterpose a visible form to a hidden content; excavating a different, but similarly fundamental order of truth — the truth of the woman, her original feminine identity. But in practice what persistently emerges as a result of foregrounding the question of representation — particularly the image, is more in the order of an underlying contradiction than an essential content. The woman artist 'sees' her experience as a woman particularly in terms of the 'feminine position', as object of the look, but she must also account for the 'feeling' she experiences as the artist, occupying the 'masculine position' as subject of the look. The former she defines as the socially prescribed position of the woman, one to be questioned, exorcised or overthrown (note Rosenbach), while the implications of the latter (that there can be only one position with regard to active looking and that is masculine) cannot be acknowledged and is construed instead as a kind of psychic truth — a natural, instinctual, pre-existent and essential femininity. Frequently, in the process of its production, the feminist text repudiates its own essentialism and testifies to the insistent bisexuality of the drives. It would seem to be a relevant project for feminist criticism to take this further — to examine how that contradiction (the crisis of positionality) is articulated in particular practices and to what extent it demonstrates that masculine and feminine positions are never finally fixed — for the artist, her work or her public.

In contrast, Vergine's phenomenology constructs the body as empirically given yet impossible to know, a body which is radically divided among the discourses and practices of individual artists (literally the pages of her book), but nevertheless unified by a certain psychological insight, she proposes: 'at the basis of "body art" and all other operations presented in this book, one can discover the unsatisfied need for a love'.²⁷ The question of desire in relation to the representation of pain and to the spectator's pleasure would indeed be pertinent here, but she does not finally address these. Instead, the iconography of the art object is merely displaced by a symptomatology of the artist (she gives a

27 Lea Vergine, *Il Corpo Come Linguaggio*, op cit, p 1.

canonical list of neuroses). The subject suffers, is 'alienated', even sexed, but still remains the unified and coherent centre of the signifying system of the artistic text.

Following the paradoxical logic of modernism's demand for objective purposes as well as transcendental truths, avant-garde practices between 1965 and the mid-1970s. initiated areas of work that divided the very field of which they were an effect. The potential of that divergence has not been completely realised. First, the materiality of the practice: initially defined in terms of the constraints of a particular medium, it must now be redefined as a specific production of meaning. Secondly sociality, raised as the question of context is, the gallery system (inside vs outside), and the commodification of art (object vs process, action, idea, etc). This must be reconsidered as the question of institutions, of the conditions which determine the reading of artistic texts and the strategies which would be appropriate for interventions (rather than 'alternatives') in that context. Thirdly sexuality, posed as the problem of images of women and how to change them, must be reformulated as a concern with positionality, with the production of readers as well as authors for artistic texts and crucially, with the sexual over-determination of meaning which takes place in that process.

The dominant critical practices of that same period have, however, so consistently converged on the traditional vanishing point of the artistic subject, self-possessed and essentially creative, that it is not surprising now to find a certain consolidation of that position in artistic practices themselves, in the return of painterly signifiers and their privileged site — the classical pictorial text.²⁸ Finally, a further question is raised — why theoretical criticism, with a very different history from that discussed so far, was also unable to sustain the discontinuities in the modernist discourse and develop an assessable critique.

Exhibition and system

Critical writing on art which places emphasis on the analysis of signifying practice rather than on the exhortation or description of artistic auteurs, generally acknowledges that art forms are inscribed within the social context that gives rise to them. Nevertheless, there is a problematic tendency to constitute the pictorial text as the paradigmatic insistence of that inscription in a way which forecloses the question of its institutional placing. The pictorial paradigm constructs the artistic text as both essen-

28 Cf Benjamin Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression', 'Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting', *October*, nos 14 & 15, 1981. He takes the view that representational art forms are historically coincident with periods of economic recession and political conservatism.

- 29 See Hubert Damisch, 'Eight Theses For (or Against?) a Semiology of Painting', *Enclitic*, vol III, no 1, Spring, 1979.

tially singular and as centrally concerned with the practice of painting; but, as Hubert Damisch has pointed out, when painting is considered at the semiotic level, that is with reference to its internal system, it functions as an epistemological obstacle — an obstacle never surmounted, only prodded by an endless redefinition of the sign or averted altogether by taking the semantic route.²⁹ Perhaps to some extent this accounts for what appears to be a certain impasse in the area of art criticism when compared, for instance, with developments in film theory.

Critical texts have focused either on analysis of the individual *tableau* (sometimes an individual artist's *oeuvre*) or on the construction of general cultural categories and typologies of art. This work has been both necessary and important. The arguments outlined here are not so much against such contributions as for a reconsideration of what might constitute appropriate terms for the analysis of current practices in art. This reconsideration is prompted firstly by developments within particular practices. Feminist art, for instance, cannot be posed in terms of cultural categories, typologies or even certain insular forms of textual analysis, precisely because it entails the assessment of political interventions, campaigns and commitments as well as artistic strategies. In this instance, interpretation is not simply a matter of what can be discovered at the interior of a composition. Secondly, a reconsideration of critical methods is required if one takes account of the specific conditions which determine the organisation of artistic texts and their readings at the present time; that is, *the temporary exhibition and its associated field of publications — the catalogue, the art book and the magazine*. From this point of view, 'art' is never given in the form of individual works but is constructed as a category in relation to a complex configuration of texts.

In terms of analysis the exhibition system marks a crucial intersection of discourses, practices and sites which define the institutions of art within a definite social formation. Moreover, it is exactly here, within this inter-textual, inter-discursive network, that the work of art is produced as text.

Rather schematically, it can be said that at one level an exhibition is a discursive practice involving the selection, organisation and evaluation of artistic texts according to a particular genre (the one-person show, the group show, the theme exhibition, the historical survey and the Annual, Biennial, etc), displayed in certain types of institutions (museums, galleries) within specific legal structures (contractual agreements, fees, insurance) and

preserved by definite material techniques in a number of ways (catalogues, art books, magazines). At another level, an exhibition is a system of meanings, a discourse, which taken as a complex unit or enunciative field can be said to constitute a group of statements; the individual works comprising fragments of imaged discourse or utterances which are anchored by the exhibition's titles, sub-headings and commentary but at the same time unsettled, exceeded or dispersed in the process of their articulation as events.

An exhibition takes place; its spatio-temporal disposition, conventions of display, codes of architecture, construct a certain passage; not the continuous progression of images unfolding on the cinema screen, but the flickering, fragmented frames of the editing machine; a passage very much at the disposal of the spectator to stop frame, rewind, push forward; it displays discernable openness, a radical potential for self-reflexivity. There is nevertheless a logic of that passage, of partition and naming and in a sense there is a narrative organisation of what is seen in the exhibition catalogue; its written (editorial/critical) commentary fixes the floating meaning, erodes the apparent polysemy of the exhibition's imaged discourse. Within a specific order of the book the catalogue confers an authorship, an authority, on the exhibition events. In it, positions and statuses are assigned for 'agents' defined as artists, organisers, critics and 'the public'. The authors/organisers impose a declarative order on the exhibition's evasive discursivity (artists, it should be noted are often the subjects of exhibition statements, but rarely the author's of its formulation). The catalogue constructs a specific reading, opens the space of a possible reworking or perhaps effects a closure; but it always has definite political consequences. This suggests that the catalogue is also an important site for interventions. Catalogue and exhibition constitute what could be called a diatext, that is two separate signifying systems which function together, more precisely it is at the point of their intersection and crucially perhaps in their difference, that the production of a certain knowledge takes place.

The exhibition has a definite substantive duration. In its phenomenal form the installation is subject to the constraints of a definite site, it is only reproducible in a limited sense, but the catalogue remains. It is infinitely reproducible and moreover, it constitutes the determinant means of institutional control over the continued distribution of works of art. In this context, the absence of a catalogue also becomes significant. Artists generally maintain that the catalogue is *more important than the exhibition*

itself. It gives a particular permanence to temporary events, an authenticity in the form of historical testimony. Together with art books and magazines, exhibition catalogues constitute the predominant forms of receiving and, in a certain sense, possessing images of art. The exhibition remains the privileged mode of reception in terms of the viewer's access to the 'original' work, but far more often the reader's knowledge of art is based on reproductions in books and magazines. Critical theories of art founded on the notion of artisanal production fail to recognise that these historically specific means of organisation, circulation, distribution, not only determine the reception — reading, viewing, reviewing, reworking, of artistic texts; but also have an effect on the signifying practices themselves. The phenomenon of artists' books, together with the emergence of specialist publishers, is now well known: it is often commented on but rarely analysed in terms of the particular relations of representation this prescribes.

How is the work of art, now reproduced as photographic image, produced as the artistic text within the system of the book? What kind of readers and authors are positioned there? Obviously, there is the loss of material specificity — problems of black and white reproduction, aspect ratios, etc, the characteristic homogenising tendency of the book: but the difference between the reproduction in the catalogue and the original in the exhibition is not merely a question of photographic techniques. It is a question of particular practices of writing, of the gaps, omissions and points of emphasis through which certain images are outlined and others erased. The authorial discourse (organiser, critic or artist) constructs a pictorial textuality which pertains more to the readable than to the visible.

In this sense it would be appropriate to speak of quoting rather than illustrating artistic texts (although this is not to say they are essentially quotable). At one level the signifying structure of the pictorial quotation has something 'in common with the press photograph in so far as it presumes to 'record' the exhibition events or to identify the object to which the reproduction supposedly refers. This process of identification appears to be immediately fixed by the denominative function of the linguistic text which accompanies it: name, title, dimensions, medium. More crucially, however, it depends on a certain cultural knowledge, as Barthes suggested, a body of techniques and practices already read as art.³⁰ This reading is grounded in the academic discourse of Fine Art and circumscribed by the limits of its traditional regimes: Architecture, Painting and Sculpture.

30 See Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image' in *Image, Music, Text*, trans Stephen Heath, Fontana, 1977.

The quotation subscribes to a form of pictorial rhetoric which defines those regimes (and the varied practices they subsume) in terms of medium: thus painting's pictorial quality, its one-dimensionality, is signified by the correspondence of frame to edge of photograph; video by the framing edge of the monitor and the 'grain' of an electronically transmitted image; sculpture's three-dimensionality by lighting or architectural setting; 'performance' similarly, by an establishing shot (ie, performer in context of audience, camera, etc); photography also relies on an installation shot or the repetition of units to signify its fine art context. But the pictorial quotation seems to be subject to a double imperative which repeats the dilemma of modernist criticism; while identifying the art object in terms of medium, at the same time it must establish the unique and individuating style of a particular artist's work. Hence there is also the 'artistic photograph': the detail, the interesting composition which displaces the record. It gives the appearance of transgression, but effectively it is a fragment, a metonymy, enveloped by the all-pervasive pictorial metaphor, addressing the reader with continued reference to the grand regime of Painting.

However, if the work of art is extracted from the discursive system in which it is established as statement, as event, then it is possible not only to construct a rather utopian view of the pictorial text as essentially concerned with a single picture, but also to assume, as Raymond Bellour does in 'The Unattainable Text', that unlike the filmic text 'The pictorial text is in fact a quotable text'.³¹ The concept of pictorial quotability suppresses the diversity of artistic practices in so far as it foregrounds a particular system of representation, the painting. Moreover, when he adds, 'From the critical point of view it has one advantage that only painting possesses: one can see and take in the work at one glance', another problem is posed: Precisely what forms of painting possess this advantage of being taken in at a glance? Here Bellour's perceptual emphasis implicates his arguments with those of modernist criticism by constructing a similar object, namely, the purely visual, uniquely flat, abstractionist painting which illustrates Greenberg's pictorial paradigm.

Consequently even if, at the centre of that paradigm, it is not the truth of an author but that of the signifier itself which is sought, as long as the site of that search is designated as the object or even the system Painting, a problem remains. On the one hand the pictorial text, with reference to the object, is too easily attained — taken in at a glance; on the other hand, as

31 Raymond Bellour, 'The Unattainable Text', *Screen*, Autumn 1975, vol 16, no 3, pp 21-22.

- 32 Hubert Damisch, 'Eight Theses for (or Against?) a Semiology of Painting', op. cit., pp 14-15.

- 33 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans A M Sheridan Smith, Tavistock Publications, London, 1972, p.100.

Damisch describes it, pictorial textuality is constituted in a divergence between the register of the visible and that of the readable, 'A divergence by way of which it is appropriate, in relation to the system Painting to pose the question of the signifier'. But since the signifier cannot be produced or even recognised by way of a position of exteriority, the effect of painting, like that of the dream-work, is created 'outside any relation of interpretation'.³² The truth of painting, like that of the signifier, is the impossibility of knowing it. And the pictorial text remains in a certain sense unknowable, impossible, unattainable. That is why it now seems more appropriate, in relation to the signifying system of the artistic text, to pose, not the question of the signifier but that of the *statement*: as Foucault suggests, 'to situate these meaningful units in a space in which they breed and multiply'.³³

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PAUL WILLEMEN

CINEMATIC DISCOURSE - THE PROBLEM OF INNER SPEECH

The repressed signifier gives itself up under cover of the image.

J Lacan

Preface

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE was written for the *Cinema and Language* conference held at the Center for Twentieth Century Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1979. At the conference, a brief paper based on some ideas developed in this article was presented under the title 'Cinema Thoughts'.

These reflections on the ways verbal language is present within the very texture of so-called non-verbal forms of signification were attention was paid to how people made sense with the film texts. A few of the Soviet pioneers had pointed towards the problem: Eisenstein's theory of the montage of attractions, with its notion that the collision of two signs may produce a third, and Kuleshov's famed experiments with semantic induction. Later, the Prague structuralists acknowledged the problem of 'thought work' (perhaps a better term for inner speech) as formulated by Boris Eikhenbaum, Roman Jakobson and, in a roundabout way, Freud. But as a rule, film theory avoided the issue, taking the production of meaning either for granted or as a secondary issue, subordinated to the rule and autonomy of the signifier. Meaning effects, as the phrase went, were supposed to be orchestrated by the text

and registered by the reader-viewer, automatically and irrevocably. Questions of specificity, thought exclusively in terms of technico-sensorial definitions of batteries of signifiers, dominated theoretical endeavours. However, at the same time, the recourse to linguistics and, later, psychoanalysis, which characterised and energised this theoretical work, also allowed the questions regarding the production of sense by readers-viewers to be approached in more productive ways. It may be worth stressing that to insist that there is no signification without a verbal dimension is not at all the same as claiming that all signification is verbal. The claim that there is a verbal (co)presence in all signification does not suggest that so-called non-verbal forms of signification can be translated term for term into a verbal text, nor does it suggest that these forms are themselves term for term translations from a verbal score. The point is that the non-verbal is never totally separate from the verbal, but always to be grasped in its relation to it. The present article attempts to begin to elaborate some of the questions that arise when the fact of a verbal presence, active and effective, in all forms of signification is accepted.

Introduction

The interdependence of the verbal and the visual in the cinema has been asserted, denied and generally commented upon by film theorists. Yet, film theory has tended to avoid the issues that such a recognition of interdependence might raise. The problems are indeed extremely complex, and the implications of their investigation could prove to be far reaching for the ways we understand and write about cinema as well as for the production and making of films. Moreover, as I will try to suggest, consideration of the verbal-visual nexus inevitably touches on the status of cinema as an ideological practice, which in turn opens up a host of further problems.

The common sense position, shared by dominant and even highly elaborated theoretical discourses, is that language and image are regarded as entirely separate, each with their own regimes of specificity. Those who contest the reductionist definition of cinema implicit in the terms 'motion pictures' or 'movies', and who insist on the importance of language as an integral part of cinema, nevertheless maintain a rigorous distinction between the two registers of signification, reducing each to their phenomenal, empirical manifestations. This article starts from the recognition firstly that 'language is the symbolic expression *par excellence* and

all other systems of communication are derived from it and presume its existence', and secondly that 'any human communication of non-verbal messages presupposes a circuit of verbal messages without a reverse implication'.¹ This recognition is founded on my previous research² which demonstrated that verbal signifiers are present in and have a structuring effect on the very formation of images (camera angles, the figuration of characters and events in narrative films). At the time, I used the term 'literalisms' to designate clear-cut instances of words marking specific figurations in films. However, the many different types of 'literalism' that could be detected suggested that the problem not only needed further investigation, but that the possibility of there being 'considerations of representability' at work in cinema raised issues which went far beyond the mere classification of different forms of literalisms. What follows constitutes a preliminary reconnoitering of the terrain opened up by the introduction of the notions of inner speech and considerations of representability into film theory and attempts to formulate a few theses which may help to focus the issues.

I Some Theses

1) THE AUDIO-VISUAL PHANTASY

Questions addressed to the relation between language and image tend to be posed as if these two terms corresponded to homogeneous units which can (or cannot) entertain specific, identifiable relations with each other. However, the first requirement when considering this question is to begin by distinguishing between the various dimensions or levels of language, from the phonemic system to the discursive, and between the various aspects of the imaged discourse, from the figurations within the image to their sequential arrangement. The first distinction to be made is that between the verbal signifier, the word (or morpheme) and its corresponding signified. Although there is no signifier without a signified and *vice versa*, by now it has been established fairly conclusively that the two sides of the sign enjoy a relative autonomy in relation to each other: they do not operate in the same way nor are they structured in the same way. Their relation, in Jakobson's phrase, is one of coded contiguity. Lacan's re-writing of psychoanalysis insists that the coded contiguity addressed by linguists is in fact a special case of coding related to the domain of the conscious, whereas contiguity operates quite differently in signification in general as can be deduced from the laws of unconscious signification. Consequently, the concept of the signifier in

1 R Jakobson, *Main Trends in the Science of Language*, London, 1973, 1.32.

2 P Willemsen, 'Reflections on Eikhenbaum's Concept of Internal Speech in the Cinema', *Screen* vol 15 no 4 (Winter 1974/75) pp 59-70:

3. It is worth signalling in this context that Metz also argued that sound is, in fact, never 'off': 'Claiming to speak about sound, one in fact thinks of the visual image of the sound's source', 'Le perçu et le nommé', in *Vers une Esthétique sans entrave: Mélanges offerts à Mikel Dufrenne* (Paris: Union Generale d'Editions, 1975) pp 373-5. Also, Claude Bailbé, in his article 'Programmation de l'écoute', *Cahiers du cinéma* no 292 (September 1978) pp 53-9, makes the point that by virtue of the placing of the speaker behind the screen, sound is located in the image itself. He makes the interesting observation, contradicting Metz's suggestion, that sounds are constructed according to the rules of an aural perspective analogous to monocular perspective. This last remark has significant implications in relation to the recently formulated arguments that hearing is less patriarchally invested than seeing; see eg Luce Irigaray's remarks quoted in S Heath, 'Difference', *Screen* vol 19 no 3 p 84.

psychoanalysis has little or nothing in common with that of the signifier in linguistics. In psychoanalysis, any element of language, from the distinctive features of phonemes through phonemes themselves to morphemes and discursive units, from semantic features to concepts and their various forms of 'presentation' can all function as signifiers. Remaining within the domain of linguistics, verbal signifiers can be seen to be present in cinema in specific phenomenal forms either on the soundtrack³ or as writing within the field of the image. By restricting language to its phenomenal forms, the currently dominant ideologies, promoting the notion of the audio-visual, assert that the orders of the figure and of the word are two homogeneous blocks that can only be juxtaposed, confronted or combined, but can never be merged in hybrid forms of signification, interpenetrating each other. According to this audio-visual scenario, a film can be described as cinematic in inverse proportion to the quantity of verbal—crudely identified with the literary—signifiers empirically present in the text. In addition, positions which imply that cinema is a matter of showing rather than telling, of light patterns rather than signification, are also founded on that same scenario, reducing complex forms of heterogeneity to singular homogeneous essences. These views simply ignore that meaning, an inevitable by-product of any 'mark' in whatever material of expression, is itself a verbal phenomenon: it is part of the domain of semantics. As Roland Barthes pointed out: 'To perceive what a substance signifies is inevitably to fall back on the individuation of a language: there is no meaning which is not designated, and the world of signifieds is none other than that of language'.⁴ By opposing or juxtaposing the 'audio' element to the 'visual' element, the ideology of the audio-visual engineers a psychodramatic confrontation of the figure and the word founded on the excision of meaning from the realm of language in order to maintain the gap between language and image. All relations between the two blocks become entirely external, formal, optional and ultimately dispensable.

2) THE PRESENCE OF THE VERBAL SIGNIFIED: LEXICALISATION

Perhaps the most obvious examples of verbal language conditioning ostensibly non-verbal sign systems are instances where words or phrases directly model and determine the signs of a secondary system. Although the terms 'primary' and 'secondary modelling system' are somewhat misleading⁵, in this context they appear appropriate. The 'literalism' operative in the representation of 'looking up to' by a low angle shot is one example. Another is

the verbal metaphor 'flame' for desire, love, passion, and so on being represented by some sort of fire in an image or scene containing a couple (usually young and of opposite sexes). A more elaborate example of symbolisation is described by Karel Brusak in his analysis of signs in Chinese theatre.⁶ Brusak found that make-up constituted 'a self-contained artificial sign system . . . The scheme painted on the actor's face is, in fact, a chart of the moral qualities of the *dramatis persona*', a system not unlike the typing of heroes and villains in early silent cinema, where white = good and dark or black = bad. Brusak lists an interesting scheme of colours corresponding to specific verbal meanings:

Black means simplicity, sincerity, courage and steadfastness; red denotes loyalty, honesty and patriotism, crimson is used with old men as a sign for the calm of old age and prudence allied to these qualities; blue expresses obstinacy, cruelty and pride; yellow indicates ruthlessness, slyness and wiliness; white stands for hypocrisy, irascibility, baseness and viciousness. The extent of the coloured area on the actor's face corresponds to the extent of the moral quality in the character of the dramatis persona . . . Green is reserved for spirits and devils, gold for gods.

Brusak also comments on other substitutes for verbal expressions: 'Movement of the facial muscles are conventionalised; binding stipulations govern which facial expression should be used to express a given emotion relative to character type and age and the nature, intensity and duration of the feeling'. Movements such as a particular sleeve-gesture are 'a sign replacing the verbal wish that the other desist from his greetings', and he stresses that Chinese classical theatre manifests 'a stock of several systems of lexicalised signs'. Although such conventions cannot be regarded as literalisms, they nevertheless constitute examples of the lexicalisation of visual signs, of a kind of verbal score being performed by means of non-verbal signs.

But lexicalisation appears to be only one aspect of the verbal presence in the visual. The other is its structuring function in the dynamic of the textual system as a whole. Brusak's examples of the latter, although they refer to theatre, are equally applicable to the cinema: all that is required to effect that transition is the filming of a performance. His examples are particularly interesting in that they constitute instances of condensation: the apparent absence of a code or 'language' produces deformations or exaggerations in other sign systems. Brusak noticed that on the one hand 'the use of scenic articles linked to costume comprehensibly

4 R Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* New York: Hill and Wang, 1968, pp 10-11.

5 Juri Lotman introduced these terms to suggest that 'since man's consciousness is a linguistic consciousness, all the varieties of models constructed on the basis of consciousness — and art is among them — can be defined as secondary modelling systems'. In *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (1971), Michigan Slavic Contributions no 7, Ann Arbor.

6 K Brusak, 'Signs in the Chinese Theatre' (1939), in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions* ed L Matejka and I R Titunik, (Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1976 pp 59-73.

delineates the character of the personage while obviating the necessity for explanatory passages in the dialogue'. But as the delineation of character is already coded by the make-up, the linked usage of scenic articles and costumes presumably functions as a conventional instance of double coding or motivation. This would suggest that the second aspect of the function is perhaps more important: the replacement of explanatory passages in the dialogue. In cinema, such instances are often referred to as 'condensation'; for example, the need to 'condense' a novel into a film. Brusak suggests that what disappears from the dialogue resurfaces in the combination of costume and scenic objects. This decathexis of one register accompanied by a hypercathexis of another is intensified by a further aspect of the use of costume: as 'Chinese classical theatre is without lighting effects, this gives rise to the magnificence of Chinese theatrical costume' since it must also perform the task of 'forming the scene', of structuring scenic space. The splendour of the costumes is thus the result of two separate but cumulative processes. In it we can trace the 'absence' of lighting and of dialogue. An extension of the argument that immediately suggests itself is that silent cinema can be understood as functioning with similar condensations: heightened stylisation as a result of the 'absence' of audible dialogue, noise and colour. The same applies to the prevalence of 'dramatic lighting' and 'expressive' styles of montage. These things seem obvious and have been remarked on by many critics and theorists. But the implications of such remarks are seldom pursued. The question is whether the invention of sound cinema made it possible to absorb and accommodate on the soundtrack all possible manifestations of language that could not in some way be located in the image. Was audible speech really the only extra form of language that needed accommodation in the film text? The actualisation of audible speech via the soundtrack did profoundly affect the processes of filmic figuration. But a number of examples of the remaining structuring impact of the verbal can be disengaged fairly easily. In Monte Hellman's *Two Lane Blacktop*, the last image of the film, representing the final 'burn out', looks as if the celluloid catches fire in the projector. But there are also examples where the presence of the word, or indeed of intersecting chains of verbal signifiers structure aspects of films which are not so easily accounted for as one-to-one substitutions of images for words. For instance, in Sam Fuller's *Pick Up on South Street*, there is a camera movement which starts off with a close shot of Skip/Richard Widmark and Candy/Jean Peters, then the camera backs

away and travels to the left while keeping the kissing couple in the centre of the frame. The camera stops moving when the two chains hooked together in the middle of the image vertically divide the frame. After a few seconds, the camera completes the shot by returning to its initial close shot of the couple, still kissing. This 'hook' appears to function in a number of different verbally determined threads: the two are getting hooked on each other, but Skip/Widmark is also 'on the hook' in the film, as is Candy/Peters. Moreover, the hook also connects chains from which hangs what Hitchcock called the McGuffin of the film. The apparently pointless camera movement thus hooks into a number of different semantic strands. Finally, Terence Fisher's film *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* charts the tribulations of a creature which contains the mind of a scientist, the body of a murderer and the soul of an artist and is torn between these different forces. In the end, the creature is torn to pieces literally.

This suggests that the presence of language in cinema cannot be confined to the soundtrack nor even to the occurrence of specific literalisms. Although the discourse of the 'hooks' or of the 'tearing apart' is not explicitly spoken, it is nevertheless an integral discourse of the text. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud came across this form of presence of language with such frequency that he discounted the idea that some peculiar symbolising activity of the mind was in operation, and argued that all such 'images' were grounded in folklore, popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes.⁷ All of them, in fact, verbal activities.

3) VERBAL DISCOURSE AS FRAMEWORK

Another type of verbal manifestation, already hinted at with the example of the code of make-up in Chinese classical theatre, is the production of semantic effects apparently not motivated by any of the signifiers underpinning it. This phenomenon has been explored extensively in terms of sound or colour symbolisms and is brought about through a mapping of relations of resemblance (themselves culturally determined and possibly formed through the process of synaesthetic thinking that characterises early childhood) on to the relation of coded contiguity between signifier and signified. Such a process can be provoked by phonemes or even by component features of phonemes. Taking this type of functioning into account, it is impossible to conceive of any type of 'mark' which is radically a-signifying. As Jakobson wrote: 'Owing to neuropsychological laws of synaesthesia, phonic oppositions can

7 S Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976, p 148

- 8 R Jakobson, *Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning* Harvester, 1978, 1,113.

- 9 J Nattiez, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* Paris, Union Generale d'Editions, 1975.

- 10 Zofia Lissa, 'Aesthetische Funktionen des musikalischen Zitats', in *Sign, Language, Culture* ed R Jakobson, A J Greimas et al Paris-The Hague, Mouton, 1970 pp 674-89.

- 11 R Jakobson, 'Musikwissenschaft und Linguistik', in *Selected Writings* vol II, Paris-The Hague, Mouton, 1971 pp 551-3.

- 12 M Plaza, 'Phallogomorphic Power and the Psychology of "Woman"', *Ideology and Consciousness* no 4, 1978, p 12.

themselves evoke relations with musical, chromatic, olfactory, tactile etc sensations'.⁸ This process can also work in the opposite direction. For instance, in view of the multitude of references to music as the a-semantic art *par excellence*, it is of some interest to note that the musicologist J J Nattiez⁹ identified such a notion as a hangover from mid-nineteenth century romanticism. Nattiez insists that it is the social discourses within which music is embedded that determine which sets of selections, rythmical patterns, etc are identified as significant, as constituting the difference between one piece of music and another. Furthermore, all music is shot through with semantic values far exceeding notions of sound symbolism, as can be seen from the various types of musical 'quotes' studied by Zofia Lissa.¹⁰ Jakobson also comments on the phonological, that is cultural, rootedness of musical systems.¹¹ This is not to suggest that musical signifiers have stable signifieds and are therefore translatable into a continuous verbal discourse. The point is that it is not possible to abstract music from the discourses within which it functions and in terms of which it is produced. To isolate music from this verbal context and to define it as an autonomous object necessarily means transforming it into 'meaningless' noises or undifferentiated, unorganised sound effects. Even in music, then, allegedly the most ethereal of arts, verbal discourse is implicated from the outset in its production and perception. What semantisms illustrate is that there is no such thing as an essentially a-signifying practice and that all signifying practices, regardless of the matter of expression involved, are embedded in and subject to the social verbal discourses that surround them. As Monique Plaza argued:

*Nothing for human beings escapes the symbolic ordering of language . . . Even if one postulates the inscription in the archaic unconscious level of a thing presentation (mother's body) . . . this . . . becomes psychically meaningful through the inscription of a word presentation 'mother's body'. And, precisely, the phantasy about the mother's body can only appear as a psychic production at the point where the psychic apparatus assimilates the significance that another gives to the utterance 'mother's body'. All these psychic elaborations of the body of the mother rely necessarily on this signifying system limited by a language. When psychoanalysis refers, for example, the castration complex back to an anatomical observation, it is making a theoretical error since it postulates that a thing presentation could be inscribed by a look outside any signifying system.*¹²

Meaning, which is linguistic, cannot be escaped or bracketed,

although it can be repressed. Interestingly, and predictably, artistic practices that are claimed to be specific and materialist (in the sense of 'orientated towards their materials of expression'), are always accompanied by verbal discourse, at times verging on logorrhea. What is thrown out of the door returns, with a vengeance, through the window; verbal language has never fared so well as in the so-called civilisation of the image. It is instructive to read the writings of painters such as Mondrian and discover the way in which the discursive 'programme' determines the figurations produced. It emerges that the painterly practices are closely dependent on the definition of which 'painterly' discourses to reject, transform or develop. In this sense, verbal discourse frames a given painting in the very moment of its production. Paintings must be understood simultaneously—and in hierarchical order to be determined in each case—in terms of the function and place certain painterly practices have in 'painting', and on the other hand, the function and place they have within a discursive formation that includes and locates 'painting' as an art form. The issue to be analysed in each specific instance is the interaction between those three terms. Furthermore, due consideration must be given to the fact that such a complex dialectic is itself always embedded in and determined by the encompassing dialectic at work between the three instances that make up the social formation: the ideological, the economic and the political, with the third providing the articulation of the two others. In view of this extreme complexity, it is necessary, if only for methodological reasons, also to chart the trajectories of specific component elements or partial sets of interrelating elements. And in this respect, formalist analyses have been and still can be very productive, as semiology has demonstrated. The point at issue here is the place and function of 'formalisms' in any given situation: which discourses or methods of analysis they displace or oppose. It is a question of avoiding the hypothesis of formalisms as 'scientific', non-ideological, etc, and to always think an analytical practice as a social, historical practice of meaning production.

4) LANGUAGE AND CINEMA

The most systematic account of the location of language in cinema within a semiological model has been formulated by Christian Metz in his book *Language and Cinema*.¹³ For Metz, language is present in cinema as recorded phonetic sound and as writing in the image. As such it covers two of the five matters of expression, whose combination constitutes the specificity of cinematic lan-

13 C Metz, *Language and Cinema* Paris-The Hague, Mouton, 1974, pp 280, 153.

guage, the other three being recorded noise, recorded musical sound and the moving photographic image. Metz also gives due consideration to the semantic aspect of language but confines it to the codes of content which, although an integral part of any film, are not specific to cinema. His conception of cinema is complex and involves both a recognition of 'languages' as technico-sensoral unities and as analytical constructs, that is, as codes or collections of codes at work within these units. Nevertheless, there is no place within Metz's semiology for hybrid forms of signification nor for a consideration of signification as a discursive process in terms of subject productions and positionings. That such processes need to be addressed is signalled by Metz's introduction of the concept of filmic writing to account for the displacements, transformations, substitutions, overlaps affecting the play of codes in any given signifying network, and any particular text. But such displacements are not simply products of random interactions between autonomous and homogeneous codes or homogeneous technico-sensoral unities. As Metz's notion of filmic reading suggests, there is something at work in signification which exceeds the interaction of semiologically defined sets of codes. Metz goes so far as to speak of the destruction of codes in that process, referring to the work of Julia Kristeva as a possible source for an understanding of that process. Presumably, when he cursorily inserts Kristeva's name into the space between cinematic language and filmic writing, he is seeking to invoke her concern with the function of unconscious processes and with questions of subject production in processes of representation. In his more recent writing, Metz concentrates on precisely the shifts and transformations effected in the domain of semiology as a result of the encounter with psychoanalysis. The problem of language re-emerges, significantly, as the question of the very possibility of an articulation between semiology and psychoanalysis. This issue is posed rather interestingly in the collection of essays entitled *Le Signifiant imaginaire*.¹⁴ At one point, in an essay first published in 1977, he states that the maintenance of a rigorous dividing line between the orders of discourse and of figuration in effect prevents any possible articulation of semiology and psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, in another essay included in that book, this time in a piece first published in 1975, he approves of that very separation, stating that 'the unconscious doesn't think, doesn't produce a discourse, but is figured in images'. In this opposition, images pertain to the domain of the unconscious while language belongs exclusively to the secondary processes, themselves identified with the

14 C Metz, *Le Signifiant imaginaire*, Paris, Union Generale d'Editions 1977; an English translation is forthcoming London, Macmillan, 1981.

pre-conscious/conscious (pcs/cs) system. The possibility of an agency or instance operating on both sides of the divide between the unconscious and the pcs/cs systems receives no mention. The implicit recognition that the crucial problem here is exactly the way the unconscious works through into the pcs/cs systems, is presented by Metz in the form of a question: 'How to understand censorship?'¹⁵ or in terms less likely to reactivate the idea of an absolute barrier: How to understand resistance? This question radically shifts the whole problematic set up by the concepts of cinematic language and filmic writing. No longer is the relation between them analogous to that between language system (*langue*) and speech. Now, the absolute insistence on the homogeneity of the matters of expression inevitably becomes a little less absolute, and the cinematic codes begin to occupy the place of the symbolic in psychoanalysis. The question as to how to think resistance can also be reformulated as how to think the articulation between heterogeneous orders each of which is itself far from homogeneous, in that symbolic and imaginary always co-exist in a necessary simultaneity without any clearly demarcated dividing lines. The question of resistance is also that of the join between the unconscious and pcs/cs systems, that of a discourse that articulates, in its very texture, thing—and word—presentations. The fact that the rest of Metz's book can be read as a systematic skirting of that question in no way diminishes the merit of having posed it in the first place. The problem appears to be that Metz continues to think cinematic language in terms of technico-sensorial unities. Whenever he addresses the status of verbal language and its relation to the unconscious, Metz discusses the matter in terms of equations between thing presentations, film images, the unconscious and the imaginary; word presentations are equated with the spoken and written appearance of words, without any transitional discourse being considered as articulating both orders. Equally, the possibility of phonemes or phrases having a structuring impact on the formation and sequencing of images is held in suspense or reduced to the viewer's socially determined ability to identify iconic figures as objects, that is, the code of iconic naming. Although he repeatedly refers to the work of Lacan, certain fundamental aspects of that work appear to be left out of the picture. The first is the basic notion of the repressed signifier with the subsequent point that an image, part of an image or even a series of images can be produced by the repression of a verbal signifier. Such an idea cannot be accommodated in a semiological framework, where a signifier is always

16 A Lemaire,
Jacques Lacan
London, Routledge
and Kegan Paul,
1977, p 46.

17 *ibid*, p 281.

manifested in one, and only one, matter of expression, ruling out hybrid formations.

The notion that the repressed signifier 'can only give itself up under the cover of images',¹⁶ when applied to cinematic discourse, infringes the absolute distinction between language and the moving photographic image. Secondly, the idea that 'a symbol is only an operator in a structure, a means of effecting the distinctive oppositions necessary to the existence of a significant structure'¹⁷ abolishes the definition of the signifier in terms of material specificity, making it into any 'mark' of difference, into the support of the process of differing. This allows for the thinking of signification as operating with heterogeneous signifiers. It also renders it impossible to equate verbal language as such with the symbolic: it is the system of language, imprinted, true enough, by the encounter with the word, which defines the symbolic, but the presence of verbal language is not an automatic indicator of the symbolic, nor is its absence equatable with the register of the imaginary. *What is at stake here is precisely the possibility of a discourse which, although structured 'like' a language nevertheless works with the widest variety of signifiers, and thus can be sited at the join of the unconscious and pcs/cs systems, the site of the processes of resistance.*

The materiality of the signifier does not become irrelevant, it merely becomes a second order factor affecting the movement of signification. The materiality of the 'defiles of the signifier', to use Lacan's phrase, affects the resistance encountered by drives and thus inflects the signifying process. But as signifiers are products of overdetermination, what is resistance in relation to one component drive may be facilitation in relation to another. In this way, the question of censorship that Metz posed as crucial for any theory of signification is reactivated along a different route: this time, what is at issue is the resistance of the discourse as opposed to the intrapsychic resistance of the subject. Both types of resistance have to do with transportation (*Entstellung*) of signifiers, that is to say, with the movement of signification.

5) INNER SPEECH AND THE EGO

What emerges from these considerations is that it is necessary to think the articulation of textual systems both with social discourses and with unconscious signification in terms of a discursive form grounded in verbal language but able to operate with a heterogeneous signifying chain.

The function of linguistic processes in the articulation of the

unconscious and the social has been addressed by means of concepts such as discourse and the notion of subject production, with the discourse of the Other (the symbolic) producing inescapable subject positions. This 'conceptual apparatus has been deployed primarily to suggest a unilateral determination by 'the' signifier or 'the' signifying chain pinning subjects in specific positions. In this fundamentally idealist view, subjects are abstracted entities adrift on a sea of discursiveness, helplessly buffeted between discourses whose effectivity operates via the unconscious and is thus, by definition, removed from any possible area of concerted and planned social struggle. A more nuanced theoretical position insists that the processes of subject production are always already in the social and thus avoids conflating social determination with determination by the unconscious. But although this position recognises that it is necessary to think the articulation between heterogeneous orders (the inextricable co-presence of real, symbolic and imaginary in any discursive process), it nevertheless stops short of addressing the terms of that 'embedding' in the social in a way which would open up the possibility of concerted action, that is, struggle against specific forms of social organisation. A third position argues that *it is necessary to start from the need for struggle rather than from the effectivity of the signifier*. Ideologies are seen as contradictory unities which, via the effectivity of institutions, try to hold subjects to determinate positions, but it is equally specified that this process of subject production is determined by extra-discursive factors as well as discursive ones.¹⁸ Although such a model comes closer to an understanding of subjectivity in history which does not automatically block any possible concept of struggle, it is nevertheless unsatisfactory in that it still relies exclusively on a model of psychic functioning reduced to a simple opposition between the unconscious and the pcs/cs systems. As such, it drastically devalues or even discounts Freud's second topography of instances (ego, id, superego) which must be superimposed on the first one. Laplanche pointed out that:

What is currently known as ego psychology is, in fact, a conception which makes of the ego an agency of the total person, differentiated . . . essentially as a function of problems of adaptation. [But] ego psychology has the merit—or at least the ambition—of wanting to re-establish the bridge between psychoanalysis and the investigations and discoveries of non-psychoanalytic psychology.¹⁹

18 P Willemsen, 'Notes on Subjectivity', *Screen* vol 19 no 1 (Spring 1978).

19 J Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore, John Hopkins, 1976, p 51.

20 Although still confined to some marginal academic groups in Great Britain, ideologism could develop into a serious threat, especially in the area of film theory — a relatively new discipline that is particularly vulnerable in its struggle to establish itself as a legitimate field of endeavour and to displace the traditions of literary criticism which still massively occupy the terrain of film studies. Ideologism proclaims the total autonomy of the discursive *vis-à-vis* the political and the economic; it abolishes the need to think politics in any terms other than those of opportunist manipulation, and it effectively abandons any notion of ideological struggle in favour of philosophical meditation and academic careerism.

That ego psychology has proved incapable of providing the means to think the articulation between the subject and the social, substituting instead a notion of adaptation, unfortunately also discredited the ambition. Opposition to ego psychology has, in the area of the theory of ideological practices, facilitated and legitimated the formulation of an equally crude position: ideologism, using terms such as 'concept', 'discourse' and 'subject' as fetishes to exorcise any possibility of ideological struggle. In its place is posed the total autonomy of the discursive (the signifying chain pinning subjects in determinate positions).²⁰ In fact, any argument suggesting that the effectivity of the social on the subject is restricted to the impact on the unconscious of the language into which a child is born, overlooks the specific function of the ego as a psychic instance, formed and intervening in its own right at a later stage. Even if the social is re-invoked, in a second movement, as determining the constraints within which discourses are formulated and subjects put into place, the relay of thought processes and their specific function and mode of operation finds no space in that model of discourse production. In this sense the necessary attack on ego psychology would seem to have resulted in a repression or bracketing of the ego as an active instance in the construction of subjectivity.

The ego is a concept relating to that aspect of the dialectic between 'I' and 'other' which, via complex processes of identification (that is, displacements) installs a force field, a reservoir of libidinal energy, a field that binds the free flow of sexual energy and as such can come to be regarded as an active agency. As Laplanche puts it, the ego is a 'specific formation [that] enters into conflicts as a participant by virtue of its double function: an inhibiting function or a function of binding . . . and a defensive function . . . through the dual modes of pathological and normal defence. [It is] a kind of relay object, capable of passing itself off, in a more or less deceptive and usurpatory manner, as a desiring and wishing subject'.²¹

Furthermore, 'If it is not forgotten that what is at stake here are chains of ideas, the ego turns out to be what introduces into the circulation of fantasy a certain ballast, a process of *binding* which retains a certain energy and causes it to stagnate in the fantasmatic system, preventing it from circulating in an absolutely free and mad manner. Such is the appearance of the *secondary process*'.²² There is no identity between the secondary process and the ego properly speaking if we keep in mind the unconscious aspect of the ego. This leads Laplanche to distinguish

21 J Laplanche, *op cit*, p 66.

22 *ibid*, p 63.

between a 'permanent portion' of the ego and a 'changing one', a distinction that will be important later in this article in connection with L Vygotsky's distinction between meaning as a relatively stable core and sense as its shifting, mobile periphery.

The 'permanent portion' of the ego concerns that part of the structure which has to do with the conscious system, while the changing part (Freud invoked the image of the mobile contours of an amoeba, contracting and expanding) relates to the pre-conscious but also to the unconscious. The functions allotted to the ego include 'not only the control of mobility and perception, reality testing, anticipation, the temporal ordering of the mental processes, rational thought, and so on, but also refusal to recognise the facts, rationalisation and compulsive defence against instinctual demands'.²³ This suggests that the ego functions as the site where heterogeneous systems, separated by the bar of repression, and contradictions, are articulated, or that the ego is, in Freud's phrase, a 'frontier creature'.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the account of the functioning of the mental apparatus stresses the topographical distinction between the unconscious and the pcs/cs systems, the former working with thing-presentations the latter with word-presentations. In between the two is located that particular effect of resistance Freud called censorship. In the light of the second topography, involving the notion of the ego, such a rigorous demarcation begins to appear less absolute. Not that the barrier is removed or weakened, but a forcefield is instituted at the join of these systems, a field that extends—unequally—on either side of the barrier. The traversing of, and the consequent deformations operated by, this barrier of repression has been described in terms of a movement from one medium to another with a different refractive index.²⁴ This site where resistance works over the join between thing- and word-presentations, where ideational representatives can encounter 'their' predicates according to the transformational laws imposed by the necessity to articulate contradictions and heterogeneity, is precisely the site of the ego. Laplanche describes this passage from one side to the other in these terms:

The transition of an unconscious idea to the pre-conscious/conscious level: the verbal representatives are superimposed through a kind of addition, on the unconscious representative . . . This does not mean that a conscious sentence duplicates an unconscious sentence as its translation, but rather that isolated representatives

23 J Laplanche and J-B Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, London, Hogarth, 1973 p 139.

24 *ibid*, p 63.

25 J Laplanche, op
cit, p 126.

26 Quoted in Jakob-
son, *Main Trends*,
op cit, p 33.

*individually cathected, induce locally around each of them an energy field accounting for the phenomenon of attention.*²⁵

In this context, attention itself is a mobile process in that it allows for various degrees of intensity, from day-dreaming to focused concentration, from discursive registers on the periphery of the unconscious to different processes of thought and inner speech to consciously articulated, logical, grammatical, verbal discourse. It is in this space that the repressed signifier that gave itself up under the guise of an image, re-finds a verbal signifier. This movement may pass through indeterminate stages, and the signifier(s) re-found will not be the same as the signifier(s) repressed, because of the intervention of resistance and refraction. Suffice it to say that the re-found signifier(s) will bear the mark of that transit, which is the process of signification itself. This means that the registers of discourse that operate in the site of the ego may be unequally or incompletely secondarised. The degree of the mix between word- and thing-presentations will depend on various factors (real or desired proximity to the unconscious, the nature of the discourses in play and the degree of resistance they activate, degrees of 'attention', possible resistance to word-presentations *per se*, etc), but both will always be co-present, like de Saussure's often cited *recto* and *verso* of a piece of paper as a metaphor for the relation between signifier and signified. It is also important to realise that such registers of discourse operating at the join of unconscious and pcs/cs systems must always be structures in dominance working with different types of signifiers, otherwise, no transition process would be thinkable. Just as the unconscious persists in all discursive practices, so does verbal language, even when repressed. *The discourse of attention, thought, has been conceptualised as inner speech* (intra-psychic speech, in Jakobson's terminology). *Inner speech, like the ego, is a frontier creature.* But without its function of binding subject and text in sociality, no signification would be possible other than delirium. *The secondarising work of inner speech, providing the initial stabilisation of the signifying process according to the contradictory demands the ego is there to bind, constitutes thought.* Thus inner speech constitutes the activity associated with an agency which holds sets of contradictions in socially, as well as unconsciously, determined balances of forces. In this light, the most perceptive characterisation of inner speech was provided by C S Pierce: 'A dialogue between different phases of the ego.'²⁶ This formulation also has the merit of reinforcing the notion that

the ego is produced as an imaginary, or rather a contradictory, unity in the dialectic of 'I' and 'other'.

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6) THEORIES OF INNER SPEECH

It should be stressed that inner speech is not to be regarded as speech by the ego. The ego is not the subject of inner speech, nor of any other discourse for that matter. As Pierce made clear, the subject of inner speech is split, it is sustained in that split as the tension between I and other. This suggests that it may be misleading to call inner speech a discourse. It might more accurately be described as a process of signification providing the conditions of existence for any social discourse. Consequently, the production of subject positions via discourses is necessarily always doubled by this particular process. *Inner speech lines (as the lining of a jacket helps prevent it coming apart at the seams) any process of meaning production, both at the stage of text-manufacturing and of reading.*

This lining accounts to some extent for the difference between the subject-image produced by a text and the historical, biological subject which presided over its manufacture. Neither is more 'authentic' than the other. If the (self) image constructed through discourse never coincides with the subject's sense of identity, this is not solely because that identity is the image of an other, but also because it is split in itself, caught up in an unceasing dialogic process. Perhaps it would be possible to consider the production of a (self) image through discursive practices as an attempt to halt that oscillatory dialogue, to freeze it, to produce a signifier that marks the gap within the structure of the 'differential subject' of inner speech. Nevertheless, inner speech remains a fairly enigmatic concept. Jakobson wrote that, 'Besides the more palpable, interpersonal face of communication, its intrapersonal aspect is equally pertinent. Thus, for instance, inner speech, astutely conceived by Pierce as an "internal dialogue" and until recently rather disregarded in linguistic literature, is a cardinal factor in the network of language and serves as one's connection with the self's past and future'.²⁷ Some of these terms are questionable, but the thrust of the remark is clear enough.

The importance of the concept of inner speech for cinema was first raised by Boris Eikhenbaum in an essay called *Problems of Film Stylistics*²⁸ published in 1927. Eikhenbaum was concerned to account for the way filmic writing—film texts—can be understood. He argued that the sequential arrangement of images produced meaning only in relation to a verbal discourse functioning as a

27 *ibid.*

28 Eikhenbaum, 'Problems of Film Stylistics' (1927), *Screen* vol 15 no 4 (Winter 1974/75) pp 7-34. See also R Levaco, 'Eikhenbaum, Inner Speech and Film Stylistics', *ibid*, pp 47-58.

- 29 C Metz, 'Le perçu et le nommé', in *Vers une Esthétique* (cit fn 3) pp 345-77.

- 30 L S Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (1936), Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1962 p 2.

constant ground against which the filmic was marked off or profiled. Thus the verbal in a sense becomes the screen upon which the film is projected, a mapping of the two producing the regime of signification involved. Eikhenbaum calls the verbal discourse doubling—lining—the film, inner speech or thought, as opposed to manifested spoken or written language which is the stuff of social speech and literature. He suggested that a film viewer must 'perform the complex mental labour of coupling the frames (construction of film phrases and film periods) . . . or else he will not understand anything . . . Perception and understanding of a motion picture is inextricably bound up with the development of inner speech which makes the connections between separate shots'. The main function of inner speech would thus reside in language's capacity to construct super-ordinate structures rather than in its lexical aspect. Eikhenbaum is less concerned with the code of iconic naming, with the lexicalisation of the image, than with its ability to construct a network of relations.

In contrast, Metz addressed himself to the problem of unenounced speech in an essay entitled, significantly, *The Perceived and the Named*.²⁹ He concentrated exclusively on what psycholinguists would call 'labelling'. He concluded that 'the perceptual object is a constructed unit, socially constructed, and also (partly) a linguistic unit' in that language (*langue*) permanently accompanies vision, ceaselessly glossing it, either 'aloud or simply by calling the phonetic signifier to mind'. Such a notion of inner speech reduces it to the unspoken but formally identical replica of phonetically enounced speech. This, as Vygotsky noted,³⁰ is to come close to a behaviourism which considers thought a reflex inhibited in its motor part. Although Metz is too perceptive a phenomenologist to allow himself to get bogged down in the morass of reflexology, his code of iconic labelling appears to be haunted by the mythical opposition between thinkers and doers that helped install behaviourism as an ideology in certain social formations. This ghost in Metz's discourse (in the sense that one talks of a ghost image in a faulty TV broadcast) is perhaps produced by the temporary convergence of the positivist discursive current shared by semiology and behaviourism. For his part, Eikhenbaum avoids this trap and never reduces inner speech to endophony, the soundless enunciation of words. In his discussion of film metaphor, he specifies that, 'Film metaphor is entirely dependent on verbal metaphor. The viewer can understand it only when he possesses a corresponding metaphoric expression in his own verbal baggage [but] the film metaphor is not realised

in the consciousness of the viewer to the point of a complete verbal statement'.³¹ Inner speech becomes the cement between text, subject and the social. As such, this concept of inner speech inserts an extra discourse into the dialectic of text and subject, opening up a different way of thinking subject production. The subject production effected by the text, defined as a set of chains of signifiers in determinate relations with clusters of semantic features, will have to pass through inner speech, itself a discursive process determined by the social and the psychoanalytic histories that combined to produce that particular 'individual' in that place at that time. In this respect, inner speech indeed becomes, in Eikhenbaum's words, 'one of the most important problems in cinematic theory'.

Eikhenbaum's intimation that inner speech differs functionally from manifested language was reformulated two years later, in 1929, in the Theses published by the Prague Linguistic Circle. The Theses corrected his assumption that 'external' speech predominates in everyday life, pointing out that for most speakers, manifested speech is far less frequent than the use of linguistic forms in thought processes. Nevertheless, the Theses tended to reintroduce the notion that inner speech was formally equivalent to manifested speech in spite of Eikhenbaum's rejection of this notion. For Eikhenbaum:

*The very act of thinking consists in the organisation of our inner speech along specific modalities and conditions, . . . to the extent that we sometimes find it hard to translate an internal discourse into an external one, as if the difference between the respective codes raised the kind of problems and difficulties of translation analogous to the ones encountered in translation proper.*³²

Although endophony, the calling to mind of the phonetic signifier, can occur in inner speech, the latter cannot be reduced to the former. It also works with images, phonemes, fragments of images, fragments or blocks of writing, schemata, mathematical symbols, etc; in short, with all the things that can work as ideational representatives in the psychoanalytic sense, as well as with word presentations in their phonetic and graphic forms. Some of these functional differences between the two 'languages' become clearer when we relate them to Jakobson's representation of social communication, involving an addresser who can exchange messages with an addressee provided that they are in contact, share a code and are aware of the context within which the whole operation

31 Eikhenbaum, op cit.

32 E Garroni, 'Language verbal et elements non-verbaux dans le message filmico-télévisuel, in *Cinéma: Théorie, lectures* ed D Noguez, Paris, Klincksieck, 1973 p 116.

33 Vygotsky, *op cit*,
pp 145-6.

34 Metz, *Language
and Cinema*, p 209.

takes place. In inner speech, addresser and addressee are the same, or at least intra-personal, which means firstly that the context need not be taken into account, there is no need for redundancies and repetitions, elaborate syntagmatic arrangements and so on; secondly, that there is no need for metalinguistic verifications of the code or even to maintain the process within a given code; and thirdly, that the phatic function, ascertaining contact, can be dispensed with. Of course, this does not mean that none of these things occur in inner speech; merely that they are not indispensable to it.

Such modifications prompted Vygotsky to concur with the Prague linguists in stressing that, 'Inner speech must be regarded, not as speech minus sound, but as an entirely separate speech function'³³ and Jakobson went so far as to speak of a different grammar being involved. Vygotsky continued to point out that 'Inner speech appears disconnected and incomplete . . . it shows a tendency towards an altogether specific form of abbreviation: namely, omitting the subject of a sentence and all words connected with it, while preserving the predicate'. Vygotsky is overstating the case here a little, because words connected with the subject (ie a great many shifters) do in fact persist in inner speech. But this dominant tendency towards predication and condensation does explain to some extent why inner speech can so freely integrate thing-presentations in its chain of signifiers, a facility it shares with cinema. This convergence also favours the production of the prevalent misconception that verbal discourse is absent from imaged discourse in that some of its signifying configurations appear to overlap.

In his discussion of the relations between thought and language, Vygotsky makes some interesting observations. Firstly, he distinguishes between thought, word meanings (ie signifieds) and speech (ie the phonetic or graphic practice of linguistic signs). This tripartite order calls to mind Hjelmslev's triad of matter, substance and form, although there are some crucial and productive divergencies. Metz summarised and clarified Hjelmslev's triad in the following terms:

The material . . . represents the originally amorphous something in which the form is inscribed . . . and the substance is that which appears when one projects the form onto the material 'as a stretched string projects its shadow onto an uninterrupted surface'.³⁴

For Vygotsky, the synaesthetic registration of perceptions (translated in the American version as 'heaps') appears to function as the semantic matter; 'word meanings' or 'concepts' operate as the semantic form; while thought becomes analogous to substance, the locus of the organising and structuring impact/imprint of language on what Freud calls memory traces. Vygotsky's placing of 'speech', in relation to 'word meanings' and thought, emphasises the coded contiguity between signifier and signified, thus articulating thought with the phonemic system, ie with the spoken discourse, the Word into which we are born. Jakobson's phrase of coded contiguity is a particularly happy one for two reasons. In the first place, it evokes the possibility of variations in coding or even of radically different codes obtaining between signifier(s) and signified(s), at the same time allowing the possibility of the coding established in verbal language operating in relation to 'non-verbal' or mixed signifying systems. In this way, 'literalisms', the use of non-verbal stand-ins for verbal signifiers, a result of repression, can be understood as straightforward substitutions of signifiers while the coding of the contiguity is maintained, although the change in signifier makes the sign available for discursive practice in a different manner, allowing it to circulate according to the rules of a different signifying regime and thus satisfying the requirements of resistance. Secondly, Jakobson's phrase is a useful reminder that the relation between signifier and signified is by no means arbitrary, but firmly grounded in the social.

The most productive aspect of the difference between Hjelmslev and Vygotsky, at least in this context, relates to the way they conceive of the 'matter' on to which form is projected. For Hjelmslev, matter is an amorphous but nevertheless homogeneous entity, while for Vygotsky, it is a-signifying but by no means necessarily amorphous or homogenous as in Hjelmslev's model. In this way, the material can be regarded as being constituted by the free interplay of sensory registration with unconscious drives, the *chora* in Kristeva's usage.

The form is then provided by the language into which a child is born, and the substance by the imprint of that language on the *chora*. The production of this imprint is itself to be understood in two phases, logically distinct but continuous in practice: firstly the registration of difference and secondly, the organisation of differences into a symbolic system, the 'becoming meaningful' of the process of differentiation. The gradual nature of this process through which language as a symbolic system is anchored in the *chora* not only produces the ground of signification, it also

accounts for the slack in the system, the lack of fit between the code of language and that which it organises. This lack of fit, this being out of true, is reinforced by the fact that the material, the *chora*, is itself not amorphous but constitutes an interplay of perception and drives, a protean mass traversed by libidinal currents setting up energy fields, force lines which both resist and facilitate the structuring impact of language, the join of signifiers and memory traces. In this movement towards coded contiguity, the constituent features of both signifiers and signifieds (distinctive features and phonemes in the former, semantic features or 'atoms of meaning' in the latter) still enjoy a relative autonomy and operate in a dispersed form. Entry into the symbolic then becomes the recognition of a social relation *vis à vis* the code of language, an ability to place 'I' in language, an ability that will always operate in the face of and against the pressure of the process of *significance*, the pressure of the *chora*. In other words, the practice of coded contiguity in language will always retain the traces of that movement towards/into the symbolic. In the semantic structure of a language, such traces produce an unstable field around signifieds, a floating periphery of sense around meaning, the cathexis of which makes the chains of signifiers veer off, activating new semantic clusters, and so on. Such a dialectic between signifier and signified determines the production of ideational representatives at the intersection of multiple strands of signification. This process of veering off, of limited drift, has been theorised in terms of the work of the primary processes which, according to Lacan and Metz, are none other than the laws of signification itself.

Vygotsky's second major distinction, that between sense and meaning, can thus be seen to foreshadow the discoveries of structural semantics. Meaning is defined as the lexically fixed core(s) of a signified, its most stable aspect(s), while sense encompasses all the possible semantic features clustering around such a core. In social speech, the meaning functions as the dominant element, while in inner speech — the frontier creature — words are saturated with sense.

Inner speech works with semantics, not phonetics. The specific semantic structure of inner speech also contributes to abbreviation. The syntax of meanings [ie semantic features—PW] in inner speech is no less original than its grammatical syntax. [There is a] preponderance of the sense of a word over its meaning . . . The sense of a word [is] the sum of all the psychological events

*aroused in our consciousness [and unconscious—PW] by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone.*³⁵

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35 Vygotsky, op cit, pp 145-6.

*Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought.*³⁶

36 ibid, p 149.

Although Vygotsky dismisses psychoanalysis as mystic idealism, his conception of inner speech is perfectly compatible with Freud's description of the way chains of thought (ie isotopies) can function in dream processes. Furthermore, the projection of Vygotsky onto Hjelmslev, the notion that thought represents the imprint of language on the a-signifying *chora*, helps to resolve some ambiguities relating to Freud's notion of memory traces which are at times defined as mere registration, at other times as registration structured under the impact of signifiers (in the psychoanalytic sense of the term). Vygotsky also mentions that 'thought itself is engendered by motivation, ie by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions'.³⁷ In psychoanalytic terms, this can be theorised in terms of the drives determining the pattern of the criss-crossing networks of isotopies traced by the movement of ideational representatives in 'unconscious' thought. However, it must be pointed out that Vygotsky's theory has no concept of resistance other than that offered by the 'adult language' into which the child is born and to which it must submit, a process represented as a linear development of maturation culminating in the phantasy of a language of pure reason. Repression does not appear to exist within his conceptual apparatus, although he does allow for the survival of 'infantile' modes of thought in 'adult' usages of language. Another major point worth stressing is that for Freud, it is the process of signification itself that matters, and not the contents involved as such. The dream work, not the dream thoughts, constitutes the essence of the dream.

37 ibid, p 150.

38 A R Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975).

7) AVANT-GARDE CINEMA AND LANGUAGE

Vygotsky's collaborator and disciple, A R Luria, continued the investigation of the connections between language and thought, concentrating on the empirical verification of the structuring function of language. In his book, *The Mind of a Mnemonist*,³⁸ he reports on a study, conducted over a number of years, of a man who was able to perform the most astonishing feats of memory. It emerged

- 39 The translation of the phonetic elements of a word into ideational representatives is illustrated by S's description of the 'mary-variations': he produced a set of images, each corresponding to a version of the name Mary (Maria, Maryushka, etc) and each image would be determined by the phonemic structure of the name. Luria added that 'Eisenstein, in testing students to select those he would train as film directors, asked them to describe their impressions of the variations on the name Mariya. He found this an infallible way to single out those who were keenly sensitive to the expressive force of words.' op cit, p 72.

- 40 A R Luria, *The Man with a Shattered World*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975, p 89.

- 41 *ibid*, p 60.

that the man, referred to as 'S', transcribed all verbal information into visual figures with due regard for the 'considerations of representability'. Nonsense words or foreign words he would transform through a system of lines and colours corresponding to the phonemic structure of the word in question, producing images akin to 'abstract' paintings. S also reported that he remembered his childhood in terms of vague synaesthetic sensations. Proto-linguistic (ie pre-oedipal) childhood was dominated by splashes of colour corresponding to the perception of phonetic sounds. Later, with the acquisition of language, figurative images would form as distinct, delineated units, but any imprecision in, or interference with, his perception of phonetic sounds such as unclear pronunciation, overlapping voices or an extraneous noise blotting out a sound, would produce blurs, splashes or puffs of smoke in his ideational representatives. Also, the ideational representatives evoked would set off their own chain of thought and, along the lines of specific isotopies, lead back to scenes from his childhood. The co-incidence of this production of clearly delineated images with the acquisition of language is worth noting. But the most important element here is the impact that phonemes are seen to have on the figuration of images, demonstrating that language is present in images not just in the form of repressed/transformed words or as the concatenations of semantic features into isotopies, but also as transformed phonemes.³⁹ A second study, this time of a soldier who had been shot in the head, proves equally illuminating. Luria writes:

*He referred to his major disability as a loss of speech memory . . . Each word was part of a vital world to which it was linked by thousands of associations; each aroused a flood of vivid and graphic recollections. To be in command of a word meant he was able to evoke almost any impression of the past, to understand relationships between things, conceive ideas and be in command of his life. And now all this had been obliterated.*⁴⁰

Eventually, the soldier recovered enough to be able to write sentences. He informed Luria that he was

*in a kind of fog all the time, like a heavy half-sleep. My memory is a blank. I can't think of a single word. All that flashes through my head are some images, hazy visions that suddenly appear and just as suddenly disappear giving way to fresh images . . . Whatever I do remember is scattered, broken down into disconnected bits and pieces.*⁴¹

Luria also noted that for the soldier, space made no sense and lacked stability. The similarity of such a loss of language to some experimental films is striking, to say the least.

What emerges from Luria's work, amongst other things, is that any firm distinction between the orders of discourse and figuration must be discarded as a phantasy conveying the wish for an edenic state of 'signification' unsullied by the requirements of the symbolic, a world where difference doesn't exist, in short: a desire to repress language. Luria accounts for the imbrication of language and images in terms of the neurophysiological structure of the brain, and his comments are of considerable interest, even though Freud explicitly located the production of ideational representatives on 'another scene', adding:

*We may, I think, discount the possibility of giving the phrase an anatomical interpretation and supposing it to refer to physiological cerebral localisation or even to the histological layer of the cerebral cortex.*⁴²

However, consideration of the neurophysiological development of the brain is not entirely irrelevant in this context. It seems reasonable to assume that the processes associated with various aspects of the brain do leave memory traces which are available for reactivation (on 'another scene') under certain circumstances. The development of brain functions appears to fall into three main stages:

*The primary visual cortex . . . breaks down images of the external world into millions of constituent parts. The secondary visual cortex converts the individual features of objects perceived into complete, manifold structures . . . dynamic patterns. The function of the tertiary cognitive part of the cortex is to combine the visual . . . tactile-motor . . . and auditory-vestibular sections of the brain. These sections are not even fully developed in the human infant but mature gradually and become effective by age four to seven.*⁴³

As the ideational activity associated with these different functions must leave memory traces, it follows that, for instance, the repression of language, which is associated with the tertiary regions, may re-activate 'thought' problems. In this way, the symptoms manifested by the brain-damaged soldier (trouble with spatial relations, fragmentation, blurring, images flickering meaninglessly, reduction to blank memory-screens, etc) can be represented by anyone who, although not in the least brain-damaged, feels compelled to reactivate pre-linguistic processes of signification.⁴⁴

42 Freud, op cit, p 113.

43 Luria, op cit, pp 35-40.

44 It is perhaps worthwhile pointing out that such a regression is not necessarily to be equated with reaction in the political sense. That would be an essentialist procedure which ignores that the political value of a given set of signifying practices depends on its location and function in a given field of signifying practices and their constitutional organisation ie in a discursive (sub)formation.

45 R Barthes, *Le Système la Mode*, Paris, Seuil, 1967 p 23.

46 J Laplanche, *op cit*, p 62.

1) THE IMAGE AS SECONDARY ELABORATION

Because of the connection between inner speech and the ego, one could say that its function is to resist the pressure of the unconscious. As R Barthes noted in relation to the captions of photographs, verbal language is there to resist the unlimited polysemy of images: 'The primary function of speech is to immobilise perception at a certain level of intelligibility . . . fixing its level of reading.'⁴⁵ From a somewhat different perspective, Laplanche suggested that: 'The ego, if it is the instrument of reality, does not bring a privileged access to the real . . . its function is essentially inhibitive: to prevent hallucination, to cut off that "excess of reality" coming from internal excitation'.⁴⁶ But it should be stressed that the images or hallucinations resisted and limited by language, were engendered through their encounter with language in the first place. As Monique Plaza insisted, no thing-presentation can be inscribed by a look outside any signifying system. So it emerges that images are constrained by language at both ends of the psychic apparatus, so to speak, which draws into question the firmly established view of the image as a continuous field, a plenitude. It is well known that images always exceed verbal language. Even though each aspect of an image is in itself 'speaking' the sum of its parts is not, being implicated in that excess Laplanche mentions. In this sense, the plenitude of an image can be understood as a product of secundarisation, a filling-in operation reconstituting the phantasy of pre-oedipal plenitude, a phantasy always marked by the symbolic incision of the frame. (For instance, it would be interesting to know what produced in the history of the visual arts the change from isolated graphic figures to the use of the pictorial frame to delimit and contain a visual field.)

Another aspect of this excess can be related to the fact that images, although involved in displacement, are primarily to be understood in terms of condensation. Freud, and Metz after him, describes the translation of the verbal into an image as a process of displacement from one register of signs to another. But this only refers to forms of literalisms. On the other hand, Freud also stresses that each element of a dream-text, of a thing-presentation, is rooted in a whole series of chains and can thus be seen as a nodal point, an intersection of significations 'bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of

thought'. In the same way, the 'infinite polysemy' of images has no ending: there will always be unanalysed material, although no unanalysable material. So, it could be argued that it is the condensation process presiding over image production which guarantees the image as a proliferating nexus of meanings and sense, some aspects referring to conscious or preconscious material, others providing the space for unconscious chains of 'signifiers to affix themselves to the figurations involved. Moreover, as paradigmatised blocks of discourses massively overdetermined in all aspects, the image is also always 'lined' by two distinct instances of inner speech: one at the time of production, binding image, subject and sense in sociality; the other repeating the process at the time of reading, a change that guarantees the insertion of the image into an entirely different set of discourses. Yet one more process must be taken into consideration in this proliferation of sense provoked and produced by the image: the materiality of the marks, the signifiers in images, their matter(s) of expression and the codes at work in them, which also affect the trajectory of meaning production. The cumulative effects of these considerations make for an extremely high degree of interminacy, even in the most figurative of figurations. The signifying practices having recourse to images can thus be described, in Mukarovsky's words, as 'designed to render things imprecise', as a movement towards indeterminacy. Mukarovsky saw this movement as indicating a decrease in the communicative function of the discourse and foregrounding the aesthetic (poetic) function. Jakobson echoed this view, specifying that 'the supremacy of the poetic function over the referential function does not obliterate reference . . . but renders it ambiguous'.⁴⁷ This notion that a recourse to images connotes a move towards imprecision and the poetic function of discourse, can be counterposed to the common sense position that the prime virtue of images is that they 'refer' more accurately. Many of the more assiduous documentary film-makers have become aware of this contradiction, complaining that it is impossible to shoot slums and misery without somehow aestheticising them: a paradox generated by the widely held but nevertheless false premise that images represent more 'accurately' than other forms of representation, and that the choice is between imprecise (poetic) 'pictorialism' and precise referential 'photography of record'.⁴⁸ Whereas captions and titles fix levels of reading, images move backwards through language, in an attempt to elude the strictures of resistance, reinforcing the misconception that while 'verbal discourse' is oppressive and authoritarian, images 'speak for

47 R Jakobson, 'Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics' in *Style and Language* ed T Sebeok, Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press, 1960, p 371.

48 P Wollen, 'Photography and Aesthetics', in *Screen* vol 19 no 4 (Winter 1978/79) pp 9-28.

49 P Willemen, 'Notes on Subjectivity', op cit especially pp 64-9.

themselves' and are more democratic, thus less socially and ideologically determined. Such a belief ignores the full extent of the role of language in helping to determine what image shall be produced, the material(s) organised in/by it, the social function and placing of imaged discourse in a given discursive formation, and the readings produced in relation to it.

2) IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS

The idea that verbal language is an important determinant in relation to the formation, function and placing of imaged discourse in a given discursive conjuncture and thus also in the way it is read, requires a few explanatory remarks, particularly because it opens up the question of verbal discourse in relation to imaged discourse in terms of ideology and politics. If we consider a discursive formation (the ideological instance of the social formation) as composed of bundles of discourses in struggle, organised into unities (ie ideologies) by the organising actions and effects of institutions,⁴⁹ it becomes possible to address the problem of the interrelation of discourses, their mutually determining dynamic. As suggested earlier with regard to the 'false' premise of the 'accuracy' of photographic representation, the definition of a discursive practice (produced through verbal discourses) to a large extent — but never totally — governs the discourses produced to oppose or reinforce it. For instance, an oppositional ideology that defines verbal discourse itself as suspect (rather than analysing which discourses are so) cannot but promote imaged and musical or gestural modes of signification because it relies, perhaps quite unwittingly, on the audio-visual phantasy. Many examples of this mechanism can be found in the mysticisms and other irrationalisms that underpinned late 1960s, oppositional ideologies in the USA. But as such ideologies change as they must even if only because of their own internal dynamic, so will the oppositional value/function of the practices they deployed and promoted. Within the 'new' configuration, different oppositional practices will be formulated which in turn will travel the same route. Unless a specific mechanism can be identified as linking this internal discursive dynamic with its social context(s), the process will start over again. Such would be a somewhat overly schematic representation of the mechanical aspects of the dialectic at work. However, in view of the function of inner speech discussed above, an extra process must be inserted into this dialectic — a process that engages the status of the subject, the binding of text, subject and sense into sociality. This process, which

doubles, lines every signifying practice, operates to articulate the laws of unconscious signification (the subject's psychoanalytic history) into the social. What I am proposing here is that inner speech is the discourse that binds the psychoanalytic subject and the subject in history, functioning as a locus of condensation, a site where the two overlap so that the 'mechanical' dialectic must always be read as a function of the productivity of unconscious processes. This is not the same as subscribing to a notion of determination by the unconscious. Quite the contrary.

Finally, it should be stressed that any consideration of the problems of signification in relation to subjects in history will be at best inhibiting, at worst reactionary, if the discourse that attends to those issues is itself not theorised as 'in history'. In other words, theoretical discourses on film must be seen in terms of the same dialectical relations that govern the production of all texts. Such theories of discourse are 'produced' in specific places of the discursive formations, with specific functions in relation to other discourses, the whole caught up in the struggle that constitutes 'the motor of history'. It may be that the moment has come to take distance from a number of discourses which in the not too distant past performed a progressive function in ideological struggles with regard to the cinematic institution. One prime candidate for such a critical distance would be any discourse that essentialises and hypostasises notions of subject production/positioning, autonomises the discursive and invokes the unconscious whenever the question of politics and the real is mentioned. The problem is no longer just the thinking of signification in history, it is one of thinking signification in such a way as to promote an understanding of how specific social formations can be changed. Because, as someone once put it, the point is to change it.

December 1978

Note (1979)

In the discussion that followed the presentation of this article at the Milwaukee conference of March 1979, a number of points were made, two of which in particular engage directly with the issues and theses put forward.

Firstly, it was pointed out that the very term 'inner speech' was likely to evoke the binary opposition inner/outer, carrying in its wake the dangers of psychologism, with inner speech being on the side of the individual psyche, while manifested, external speech would be on the side of the social. This connotation is indeed

present in the way Eikhenbaum, Vygotsky and Jakobson use the terms involved. The fact that inner speech is not phonetically manifested, nor indeed manifested at all except in the traces it imprints in acts of social, ie manifested enunciations, may tend to suggest that it is an extremely 'individual' discourse activity, located 'within' and thus highly idiosyncratic.

In the article, the point is made that inner speech is located under the sign of the ego and that the ego participates of the unconscious. In so far as the unconscious impinges upon the formation of inner speech, the latter is trans-individual, that is to say, profoundly social. The unconscious, if it is to be defined topographically, is a *locus communus* where locutions are indeed 'in common' — something clinical practice constantly attests to and which led C G Jung to try and extrapolate the unconscious from history altogether through his invention of the collective unconscious with its archetypes and universal symbols. In this respect, Freud's reply that the unconscious is by definition 'collective' and that consequently any attempt to differentiate a special agency called the 'collective unconscious' is a tautology, also means that what conventional psychology designates as the most 'private' is also and simultaneously the most social — at which point the distinction between inner and outer collapses. Moreover, the ego itself, as a psychic agency, is not only a 'frontier creature' in the sense that it straddles the boundary between the unconscious and the pre-conscious/conscious systems, it also transgresses the inside/outside dichotomy in that it is a psychic agency (ie inside) constituted by and through identifications with others (ie outside).

The second comment the paper provoked relates to this same issue. Stephen Heath remarked that 'literalisms' in cinema appeared always to take the form of heavily coded, ritualised and stereotyped formulae and phrases. In other words, the traces of inner speech in the visual, in the figuration of a narrative or a tableau, take the form of, precisely, *loci communi* of the socially and linguistically commonplace. This would be one more argument why 'images' should be considered products of secondary elaboration, that is to say, displaced enunciations invested by/with unconscious discursive processes, giving the lie to and locating the function of any ideology that insists on maintaining a rigorous separation between the orders of discourse and the figure. In this way, inner speech, the concatenation of literalisms subjected to specific processes of 'thought work' (in an analogy with the concept of 'dream work') should then indeed be considered as the site where the subjective and the social are articulated, with the

'subjective' being traced in that very process of articulation. In the same sense that the image can be seen as a specific formation sandwiched between two moments of language, so the subjective can be seen as an articulation between two moments of the social. Film images would thus be closely related, although not for the reasons usually invoked, to dream images: both can be regarded as 'grounded in folklore, popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes'.

Postscript (1981)

The notion of inner speech advocated and explored in this article makes it possible to begin to reclaim terms such as 'experience' and 'intuition' without necessarily falling into the peculiarly irrational empiricist dogmatism which for the time being appears to have the monopoly of these two terms. To a large extent my development of the notion of inner speech in this article is based on *experience* (of the way texts operate, the way people and institutions operate) and *intuition*: the projection into the future of knowledge based on the inadequately theorised and rationalised components that make up the fabric of experience. These two, garbage-can, concepts (at least that is how they are used now) no longer need to refer to a mystical 'beyond' of language. They are no more than awkward and misleading ways of referring to the inadequacy of our knowledge of the pluri-dimensionality and heterogeneity of the thought work we perform every second of the day — and night. In that sense, experience will and must always preceed and exceed knowledge in that it is, as yet, an unformulated analytical discourse which, by that very token, is vague and prone to intractable entanglements with the primary processes. In order to distinguish between experience that is liable to be transformable into understanding, and experience that is evidence of severe neurotic or psychotic disturbances (or both), it is necessary to listen to the voice of experience, to read it in its tortuous and multilayered sets of shifts and transformations, that is, to read it as a process of inner speech that constitutes an intermediate stage between the rudiments of thought and analytical understanding. In this sense, experience informs a type of discourse which is analogous to artistic practices: it is one of the many possible compromise discursive practices that hover at varying levels in between the total solipsism of fusion with the mother (the 'utopian' dimension of art practices) and the phantasy of total mastery perhaps best encapsulated in the wish for there to be a unity of 'correct' theory and practice.

GILLIAN SKIRROW

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE ASSOCIATION OF CINEMATOGRAF, TELEVISION AND ALLIED TECHNICIANS

Rule 87

Interpretation: In these Rules, except where repugnant to the context, the feminine gender includes the masculine, and vice versa

There is not a single instance of the feminine gender between the covers of the ACTT rule book, but the hopeful formulation of Rule 87 exemplifies the gap between this trades union's policy on equality of representation and what it has actually — or actually not — been able to achieve. Women in the union are still interpreted rather than directly represented.

The ACTT represents most workers in the film industry, independent television, and laboratories, and also has members in educational technology, the BBC, local radio and facilities companies. The film and television industries have traditionally had a wide range of men's jobs and a very narrow range of women's jobs, so not only is the proportion of women union members quite small (19.5% at the end of 1980), but since shop committees tend to be made up of representatives of sections of the industry

and most women are concentrated in only two or three sections, the number of women who have experience of union committee work (other than as committee secretary) is very small indeed. The ACTT has recognised that women are under-represented both in the industry and in the union and has done probably more than most unions to gather information about the problem and pass resolutions affirming commitment to a policy of equal opportunity for women. As long ago as 1975 the union published a commissioned report, *Patterns of Discrimination Against Women in the Film and Television Industries*, which is still regrettably up-to-date since the union has been as ineffective in changing discriminatory practices as it has been successful in describing them.

The object of this article is not to bash the ACTT, however, but to try to explain and account for a change that has come about during the last year in the union's attitude to women's issues. In January 1981 there was an ACTT Women's Conference, and in April the Annual Conference (the supreme

governing body of the Union which all members are entitled to attend) passed a resolution formulated at the Women's Conference, calling for the appointment of a new Head Office official 'with responsibility for implementing long-standing Union policy on all issues of equal opportunity in the industry'. The Finance and General Purposes Committee — an elected body which manages the day-to-day business of the Union, and on which there are no women — has at the time of writing begun procedures for filling the post. The appointment of an Equality Officer¹ will not, of course, provide an instant solution — in recognition of which the wording of the advertisement for the post differs from that of the resolution, charging the person appointed only with responsibility for the 'pursuit' of the Union's equality of opportunities policies. Nevertheless, since the Union has made money available first for the Women's Conference and now for another new official — having quite recently established two other posts at Head Office — there is clearly a new and significant commitment. This seems worth marking by a consideration of why there has previously been so little action and why so much so recently. My suggestion is that the change is related to changes in the practices and technologies of production and distribution and the way these have been taken up on the one hand by the film and television industries and on the other by the women's movement.

Patterns of Discrimination was written at a time when the Union had very favourable agreements in all its main spheres of influence. It had begun as

the Union of the Film Industry where it had established agreements with the British Film Producers' Association, and although this industry was walking into the sunset by 1975, the Union still flourished through its guaranteed source of income from members in independent television who were the subjects of an agreement between the Union and the Independent Television Companies Association. Most of the film laboratories were also organised by the ACTT, under the Laboratories Agreement. The only likely growth area seemed to be in educational technology in Colleges and Universities and the Union had begun to organise there, too. Needless to say, the patterns of organisation and agreements had been established by men and reflected the assumption of the times that workers wanting to make a career in the industry would be men. For example, while the traditional links between the communications industries and the military had determined that the patterns of responsibilities and working relationships in the industry would be strictly hierarchical, and this suited the Union because it made grading claims clearer, the Union did ensure that there would be the possibility of progression through the grades for someone willing to take the time to gain experience rather than qualifications; so recognised career ladders were set up which started with jobs such as messenger-boy or post-boy from which women, as it happened, were excluded. This situation is typical of the ways in which patterns of discrimination against women were so tightly woven into larger patterns of agreements that to try to take them out would have involved unravelling all the certainties which at this time suited both management and union so well.

There is of course something besides

1 Sandra Horne has now been appointed Equality Officer.

96 history and inertia that is working to keep union agreements sexist, something which can be seen most clearly at the TUC. The TUC is a curiously sentimental and emotional gathering which, recognising that its strength is based on the relative powerlessness of those it unifies, seems to make a fetish out of weakness. Nervous speakers receive the most courteous hearing and attract the warmest applause; the few women who attend are addressed as 'dear' or 'love'; anger (usually represented as distinctively masculine by gestures and vocabulary) is expressed *on behalf of others*. It is a brotherhood of breadwinners, the dignity of whose struggle depends on representing and defending the weak. So there is a threat to all unions when the very representation of weakness itself — women — demand a position of strength, instead of being satisfied dependents. For a broadcasting union, however, and particularly for members in independent television on whose regular 1% of salary the union has come to rely, feminism presents a further threat, for it challenges the certainties of their everyday work. The successful partnership of management and union depends on the independent companies selling their product to a mass audience, and given this audience and the relatively short time-slots between commercials, the most highly valued qualities in a production are clarity and the ability to be quickly understood. Since it is the accepted conventions of gender difference which usually provide the central stability from which enigmas of plot and character can be introduced without loss of clarity, sexism has become part of the knowledge of how to make 'good' programmes. It has associated itself with common-sense in the practices

off-screen, too, in both formal routines such as the use of a stereotypically glamorous woman's head as a dummy for the studio cameras to match skin-tones, or informally in the way, for example, that a film crew often mark out the difference between themselves and the PA when away on location, by making her an apple-pie bed or playing other boyish pranks which border on harassment. So women are given a certain position in independent television and are excluded from others, an exclusion which gives the male workers a privilege that helps to mask from them the 'master-slave' relationship in which they themselves work. This relationship is itself important to the representation of women, for the separation of the skilled technicians from any say in the content of programmes produces a lack of interest in or responsibility for content, that almost amounts to a phobia. ACTT members pride themselves on their skills, techniques and professionalism but, in general, refuse to be moved to condemn programmes or films that are sexist, racist or even anti-trades-unionist, on the grounds that content is someone else's responsibility. So even if members were able to distinguish sexism from clarity they would be unlikely to 'interfere' in a production, in support of which inaction they are likely to re-assert the myth that the audience is getting what it wants, or at least that it can be demonstrated from the ratings to be wanting what it is getting, and that the duty of broadcasters is only to satisfy the demands of the audience.

In 1980, however, the myth of a largely satisfied audience began to break down. Dissatisfied groups within the audience lobbied the Fourth Channel and the franchise applicants. The

technology of the video-disc, which in 1980 looked like being a major new form of distribution, promised minority programming at no greater cost than programming for larger markets, and dozens of small production companies sprang up to meet what they hoped would be a demand for a different kind of programming through this and other new forms of distribution. Since then the Home Office has published a report on its study of direct broadcasting by satellite and has authorised twelve cable Pay-TV experiments. No-one can now be in any doubt that the BBC/ITV duopoly of production and distribution of television programming and interpretation of 'demand' — is coming to an end. The television industry recognised this in its brief for the Entertainment Workshop of the 1981 Edinburgh Television Festival:

The practitioners will look at the likely impact of new technologies which may change the emphasis of our business from current pre-occupation with production to meeting the desires of consumers; after all, if we don't, someone else might. So should we (can we?) give people what they want?

For the Union, the re-structuring of the media which is taking place has caused many uncertainties. Its own structure of four main branches — Film, Television, Laboratories, and Educational Technology — is out-of-date: the distinction between film and video is becoming less clear-cut; production is no longer confined to broadcasting institutions — even some Labs (eg Visnews) have production departments; and new growth areas such as local radio and facilities companies do not fit into the Union structure at all. It can no longer be

assumed that the ITV companies will continue to employ large numbers of in-house staff — there are many indicators that more bought-in programming will be used — so not only may the union's previously safe source of funds disappear but it may have to organise television workers on a freelance rather than an institutional basis. This would be more costly and would weaken the grip which the TV branch at present has on the Union. The origin of bought-in materials will become increasingly difficult to trace as the technology becomes more sophisticated, so existing union agreements will be threatened. Material made for the video-disc or cassette or other non-broadcast distribution is not subject to any agreement at the moment, nor is there an identifiable body of employers with whom to negotiate an agreement. To deal with the new situation the Union has set up two committees: one to monitor the developments in the restructuring of the media, to influence policy decisions by Government and public authorities, and to advise the Union on areas for new agreements and negotiation; the other to look at Union structure and patterns of organisation. Clearly a rather different Union is going to emerge from all this, and the patterns of agreements in which discrimination against women are embedded have already been disturbed.

Meanwhile, the women's movement has missed out on the age of the mass media, but the effect of their exclusion from institutions has not been entirely negative for women. From very early on representation was recognised as a key issue for feminism: there has been no lack of theoretical work, and even women's groups which

98 had no access to theory or to production facilities found it useful to do work on media images of women. So women began to produce films for ready-made distribution outlets in women's groups throughout the country, becoming early forerunners of what in industry terms is the present swing to 'market orientation'. There are now organised women's distribution companies, such as Cinema of Women films which is building up an international catalogue and will be in a good position to supply, for example, to a Pay-TV service. On the production side, too, the lack of institutional framework has been an asset rather than a hindrance: many feminists would choose to work outside institutions anyway in order to be able to work in all-women groups, to develop less hierarchical production practices, and to be able to involve sections of the proposed audience in the production. The advent of the Fourth Channel not only provided a focus for a campaign around issues of the representation of women in broadcasting — notably in the Women's Broadcasting and Film Lobby — but also gave a new stimulus to women's production companies. The dearth of women's productions coming from inside the mass media has helped these independent women's companies if not to flourish at least to survive, and to become one of the driving forces behind a new British independent cinema that is replacing the old film industry. There are now enough women's films around to prove that virility is not a necessary or even an interesting quality in a production, and that there is an audience for a representation of women different from that routinely produced by the mass media.

All this activity, however, hardly produced a ripple within the union.

Even though women's action groups had started within television companies — formally at Thames and less formally but no less vigorously at Yorkshire and Granada — there was no way these groups could influence union policy since they could not persuade their shops to put motions to Annual Conference. So it was the follow-up to an Annual Conference resolution from the Educational Technology Branch which produced the January 1981 Women's Conference. The resolution, passed by the 1980 Annual Conference, called on the union to 'identify particular jobs in which for the previous 12 months there have been no, or comparatively few, women employed', to develop with employers an affirmative action plan and to produce a report for the General Council within six months. Within six months there was, of course, no report and no survey of jobs had even been started. At the General Council at which this was raised two factors influenced the successful outcome: first, the Union was beginning its debate about restructuring and the General Council was in a state of near chaos, secondly, the proposal for a one-day Women's Conference in lieu of the Union's inability to put into effect the Annual Conference resolution came in a very forceful speech from the Deputy General Secretary who was the Organiser of the Union's Equality Committee. Even after what appeared to be a clear-cut decision of General Council to hold a Women's Conference there were those, including women members, and women members of the Equality Committee even, who expected it to be a Conference on women's issues but open to men and women union members. Such was the terror of an all-women gathering. In the end there was some compromise, in that

members of the Finance and General Purpose Committee were invited for the final plenary session and the Deputy General Secretary and the editor of the Journal were invited for the whole day. The Conference turned out to be the catalyst the women in the Union needed. Those present had overcome many obstacles in order to be there at all, the main one often being their male shop stewards who had received the notices about the Conference but had not displayed them or taken any steps to notify their women members about the Conference. Many of the women had heard about the Conference through an issue of the Union Journal, *The Film and Television Technician*, which had appeared just before the closing date for the Conference. There were many women there who had experience of organising around women's issues but for whom there had not before been any way of engaging with the Union's decision-making processes, or of finding other groups of women in the Union with whom to plan concerted action. And there were women who were shop stewards and would not want to be called feminists. One day was scarcely long enough to evolve a strategy for improving the representation of women in the Union and in the industry, but by the final plenary session five separate areas for action had been identified:

1 ENTRY INTO THE INDUSTRY

A priority must be an attack on the massive under-representation of women in technical grades. In recruiting for these grades ITV relies to some extent on experience and training provided by other industries or on qualifications such as HNC or HND. But as *Patterns of Discrimination* showed, although engineers

were generally qualified, men in sound, camera or lighting often had few relevant qualifications or experience, with over 50% of cameramen going straight into the industry after leaving school. Since few schools will point girls in this direction until women are more visible in the industry, and since some of the qualifications and experience that women do have are no less relevant than those expected by the industry, Conference felt that a quota system should be used to introduce women into these grades as quickly as possible.

2 ENTRY INTO THE UNION

It was reported that women who had been working in technical grades in independent cinema, having trained perhaps at a film school other than the National Film School, were unable to get ACTT tickets even when working on productions which were subject to Union agreements. On such occasions, the rumour had it, women were given dispensations to work, but not Union membership. That the rumour existed — quite apart from whether it had a basis in fact — was an indication of the hostility and unapproachability which women had experienced in encounters with the Union. Conference felt that a system something like that of the NUJ's, where people earning 60% of their living by working within the area covered by the union could apply for membership on that basis, should be investigated. This would not only benefit women but would be a realistic way for the Union to organise in non-broadcast areas where there are at present no agreements.

3 CHILD-CARE FACILITIES

Though the Union had had policies since 1975 on the provision of child-care facilities by employers, this was never

100 made part of standard Union agreements. Moreover, the Union did not provide crèches for its own meetings or hold meetings at a time when those responsible for looking after children could be there. Conference suggested that there should be a crèche at General Council meetings which would of course be available for the children of both women and men members, but may have the long-term effect of encouraging more women to become shop-stewards. This crèche is now provided.

4 ACTT EQUALITY COMMITTEE AND UNION STRUCTURE

At the time of the Conference, the Equality Committee — the body with specific responsibility for looking at questions of discrimination — was, like other Union committees, appointed by General Council and responsible to General Council. The General Council is the main governing body of the Union between Annual Conferences. It is made up of all shop stewards in the Union but in practice about 50 people regularly attend the meetings which are usually held every 6-8 weeks. GC agendas are often very full and a report from a committee can take several meetings to climb up an agenda, which may mean half a year or so. After a decision from GC or from Executive Committee (a smaller body, meeting every fortnight, which is representative of the four branches of the Unions and governs the Union between General Councils) the Union writes to all shops stewards informing them of decisions where action needs to be taken at shop level. This machinery puts the Equality Committee at the mercy of all the existing inequalities in Union practices, from the appointment of its members by the GC at which there are often fewer than

half a dozen women — only one or two of whom are likely to be feminists — and no black people, through the prioritising processes of overburdened agendas, to the implementation of policies by the (overwhelmingly) male, white, shop stewards.

The Women's Conference had only been achieved by taking several short cuts through this machinery, so members attending suggested that to be effective, the Committee of Equality needed to engage more formally with Union structure and to have direct lines of communication with women in their local shops or sections. It was proposed that every shop should have to include an equality representative in addition to its usual constituency and that the Union's Equality Committee should be made up of these representatives or elected from their number or selected from among them on a regional basis.

5 AN ACTT EQUALITY OFFICER

Many of the achievements of the Equality Committee had only been possible because of the vigorous support of the Deputy General Secretary who was its organiser and who, like other vigorous people, was very overstretched. The Conference felt that nothing less than the commitment of a full-time member of Head Office staff would make it possible to achieve anything more, particularly in the four areas outlined above. Issues of equality of opportunity for women and black people should be a matter of urgency in a broadcasting union — whose members were constantly representing these groups to a mass audience — and needed a living presence in the Union. It was decided that, if possible, the request for the appointment of an Equality Officer should be put to Annual Conference, 1981. It had to be an

Emergency motion since the Women's Conference took place after the closing date for motions, and it had to be adopted by a shop since neither the Women's Conference nor the Equality Committee could put motions to Conference.

The motion was eventually adopted by a Granada shop and passed overwhelmingly at the Conference in April 1981. Whether it would have been passed if Annual Conference had not taken place on the week-end of the first Brixton riots is a matter for speculation, but my guess is that it would. At the 1980 Annual Conference the uncertainties of the new developments in technology had threatened to split the Union, but at the 1981 Conference they served to unite it, perhaps in recognition of the chaos there could be without a strong union to regulate the new areas of production and distribution. The motion from the Women's Conference benefited from the new spirit of co-operation, but also, I think, from being identified with 'new developments'. Several of the women who spoke were new to Annual Conference and so were evidence of a growing force. They spoke with confidence since they knew they represented the Women's Conference and also an identifiable consumer group to which the Union now had to give credibility. Besides, adding another member to Head Office staff did not seem a very threatening thing to Annual Conference: a quota system will.

The big questions for the future are whether the same rate of progress in women's issues in the Union will be maintained and if it is, whether a better off-screen representation of women will have any effect on on-screen representations. There will certainly be more women independent film-makers

recruited to the Union, but their impact will depend on how they are organised. Many of them work in London and only in film, so, for example, if they were organised in one London regional film section they would perhaps only be entitled to one representative at General Council and there is no guarantee that that representative would be a woman. Getting women into all grades in the present broadcasting institutions is particularly important, not just for the publicity, but because these institutions are still going to dominate production in the next few, crucial, years. Quota systems will be very difficult to introduce, partly because they are based on what appear to most Union members as two contradictory assumptions: that women are in a position of weakness and need to be helped (ie are essentially weak) but they are capable of doing a demanding job which some men members have taken a lifetime to reach. There is little time for subtleties of argument at Annual Conference or General Council, where these things are decided, and local equality representatives, if they are established, will find themselves depressingly isolated. But there is one area in which the Union is likely to accept positive discrimination, and fairly rapidly, and that is in entry to the National Film School and/or the setting up of new training schemes there. At present the School takes comparatively few women, a point which was not raised at the Women's Conference — possibly because the Conference was held there — and it is noticeable, perhaps inevitable, that some of the most active women film-makers and formally innovative work have come not from the NFS but from places such as the Royal College of Art, particularly from the Stuart Hood era. The National

102 Film School, which in return for Union recognition and more or less automatic tickets for its students is subject to Union control and so has been tied to the routines and practices of the mainstream industry, is probably flexible enough to respond to new demands and could provide the space women need at present for basic training and retraining. Again, the new technology debates have increased Union members' awareness of the importance of staff development and re-training. So I would hope that there are good chances of the National Film School becoming a major site of struggle in the next year or two.

As for the question of on-screen representation of women, it would be naïve to suppose that this can be changed from within before there are far more women active in the Union. Even then, it would not be easy since the Union is set up primarily to protect its members from employers, not from each other, and the ACTT has been particularly ineffective even in initiating action to change the representation of trades

unionists on television. Academic studies such as those produced by the Glasgow Media Group have a much better chance of directly influencing such representation, but clearly it is important to have people both in the industry and the Union who can respond to such work. Sadly, many women active in the women's movement are not prepared to be active in trades unions. So, in the pursuit of its equal opportunities policies, the Union may catch more women who do not behave in a very sisterly way except when it comes to campaigning for a positive discrimination which will improve their own chances of promotion. There is the danger that these women can be exploited by reactionary forces in the Union to split the left vote and to block feminist policies. However, the advantages probably outweigh the risks. It has rarely happened that adding women to any organisation has simply resulted in a continuation of the same organisation plus women; and it can be no loss to be interpreted by the feminine gender rather than the masculine.

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SUSAN HONEYFORD

PESARO 1981

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The Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema held each year in Pesaro is principally a cultural rather than a commercial film festival. The obvious comparison is with the Edinburgh Film Festival. Run by a committee headed by writer and critic Lino Micciché and a small administrative team, Pesaro is state funded, though not lavishly. According to Micciché all seventeen Pesaro film festivals have cost less than a third of one Venice Biennale.

Each year Pesaro focuses on a particular area of cinema or a particular critical concept. Because it is relatively free from box office pressure, the whole of the festival can be organised around that year's theme rather than having a separate theoretical section added onto the usual festival screenings. The press are therefore obliged to engage more directly with the theoretical aspects of the festival, though this does not necessarily make them any more sympathetic to them.

The 1981 festival was devoted to Latin American cinema. The term now covers not only the cinema of all the Spanish speaking countries in South and Central America, Mexico, Cuba and Portuguese speaking Brazil, but also 'Chicano', that is Mexican-born-in-the-USA, cinema.

It included a retrospective of the work of Fernando Birri. Born in Argentina in 1925, Birri trained at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, worked in the film industry in Italy, then returned to his native Santa Fe where he founded a cinema school based at the university. In 1958 he completed his first Argentinian film, *Tire Dié*. *Tire Dié* developed out of a photo-documentary project. Its immediate subject is the small children of shanty towns who risk their lives running along a railway bridge begging the train passengers to throw them money (*Tire Dié* is the slang-abbreviation of 'Tireme diez centavos' — 'Throw me ten centavos').

104 Starting with these kids, the film examines the family structures, history and economy of the shanty town. The film was enthusiastically received by the public, but not by critics or the state authorities. With *Tire Dié* Birri also started the first mobile cinema in Latin America. The aim of Birri's work in Santa Fe was to develop, against the impact of cultural imperialism, both knowledge about Argentina and a national consciousness. In 1963 Birri had to leave Argentina, and then Brazil, for political reasons. Since then he has returned to Italy. His work in exile shows how European cinema (in this case principally Italian neo-realism) can be used and transformed within a Latin American context.

There were two kinds of reaction to the films from the non-Latin American audience. The first was almost complete incomprehension. The films were rejected, either from a liberal or an anti-realist position as merely and only revolutionary rhetoric, or they were recuperated into the categories of European art cinema. The second reaction was an often uncritical enthusiasm for third world/Latin American cinema which lead to an almost exclusive regard for 'political' or explicitly socially progressive films, largely ignoring the diversity of film-making strategies which exist in Latin America today. These two ways of looking at Latin American cinema are as typical of Britain as of Pesaro, and neither contributes much to an understanding or knowledge of Latin American cinema. In Britain, these two reactions come about as the result of a number of factors. The first is a widespread ignorance about every aspect of Latin America, which means that when it comes to Latin American cinema few people have a

context within which to place it. The second is that, despite the existence of a number of key texts such as Julio Garcia Espinosa's 'For an Imperfect Cinema' (1969) (translated in *Afterimage* no 3, summer 1971), there is relatively little theoretical work on Latin American cinema. This means, for example, that the forms used by Latin American cinema do not correspond directly to Hollywood or Europeans models and are frequently difficult for a non-Latin American audience to understand.

There are of course important differences between British and Latin American cinema, nevertheless, cinema in both countries is struggling to exist against the domination of North American cinema, while Latin American cinema is also trying to throw off European cinematic models. However, it was clear from discussions with the film-makers that they face many of the same kinds of difficulties in funding, distribution and exhibition as do independent film-makers in Britain. The developments which have taken place since 1974, for example the setting up of co-operatives, more women moving into film-making, development of film schools, film studies and film magazines, attempts to get better distribution, and the development of a wide variety of types of film-making, are very similar to what has been happening in British independent cinema.

The terms in which resistance to Hollywood and the development of independent cinema are argued in Britain and in Latin America are, however, quite different. In Latin America, because it is evidently part of a wider political and cultural initiative and because cultural traditions are less securely established, resistance is expressed in specifically political and nationalist terms. In Britain, the domination of

British cinema by Hollywood is only of pressing concern to those working immediately on and in cinema — film-makers and critics. Resistance to American domination in Britain tends to be more muted than in Latin America because of a number of factors obscuring the effects and consequences of domination to the British audience: Britain shares a language with North America and British stars are used in Hollywood products (in fact, for many years, American cinema represented a progressive cultural force within a class-bound culture); also, the quality of British television, subject for insular self-congratulation, 'the least worst television in the world'.

There were over a hundred films screened at Pesaro, most of which will not be seen in Britain, so I will limit my comments to institutional developments and those films which are, or are likely to be, available here. Obviously, this doesn't even start to do justice to the range of work that exists.

Firstly, the two socialist countries in Latin America: Cuba and Nicaragua. Since the revolution, Cuba has been able to develop and organise its own film industry and culture through the Institute Cubano de Arte y Industria Cinematografica (ICAIC). Cuba now produces several feature films each year, plus documentaries, cartoons and a weekly newsreel. Examples of this work were shown at Pesaro. When Cuba exports its films to the West it has to compete in a world market where the majors control most of the distribution and exhibition. One of the most important recent developments in Latin American cinema has been the setting up of MECLA, a marketing organisation of Latin American cinema based in Havana and

drawing on Cuban experience.

It is difficult for a well-organised and developed film industry to handle all the work involved in promotion and marketing, but almost impossible for individuals of even poorer and smaller industries. Nicaragua has also set up a national film institute, INCINE, which controls production (mostly of newsreels, documentaries and cartoons designed to explain what has been happening since the revolution) and also some cinemas.

Most of the capitalist countries of Latin America have some combination of protective legislation and state funding intended to stimulate national production. Perhaps the most successful in reaching a European art house audience has been the *cinema novo* of Brazil, which was the subject of a retrospective at Pesaro. Colombia and Peru are examples of countries where film-making has developed relatively recently. It was only in the mid-1970s, after legislation had ensured exhibition for Peruvian productions, that a significant number of features were made. Most of the first productions were shorts, but from about 1976 on, feature production began to take off. Frederico García's *Laulico* (1979) and *El Caso Hauayanay* (1980) can perhaps be called drama documentaries. Set in Indian communities and filmed with their help and participation in their language, Quechua, both films are concerned with the conflict, cultural as well as economic, between Indian peasant communities and *mestizo* and white landowners. García manages to represent the structures, values and ways of thinking and narrating of the Indian communities and to produce a film which engages a non-Indian audience. *Muerte de Un Magnate* (Francisco Lombardi, 1980) another Peruvian production,

106 is set in Lima. On the basis of a rather banal *faits divers* plot, in which a business man is murdered by the Indian son of his gardener and his mistress raped, Lombardi reveals some of the racial, social and sexual complexities of Peruvian society.

Legislation in Colombia has favoured the production of shorts, and examples shown at Pesaro included a documentary about Indian herbalists and healers (*Curacas*, 1981) made by a woman, Maria Victoria Salcedo, and a satire about documentary film-making about urban social problems, bad housing, poverty, lack of education and health care in under-developed countries, *Agarrando Pueblo* (Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo, 1978), shown in an NFT season in 1979.

One of the most interesting aspects of Latin American cinema has been the development of Chilean cinema during the past eight years. After the military coup of 1973, archives, film schools, the state production and distribution company, Chile Films, and even equipment, were either destroyed or taken over by the military. Most film-makers were supporters of the Popular Unity government and so were obliged to leave the country as political exiles. Since then, while there has been almost no film-making inside Chile, Chilean film-makers have been working in countries as diverse as Mexico and Finland. Some of them are fairly well-known in Britain; for example Raúl Ruiz whose films were shown recently at retrospectives in Edinburgh and London, Miguel Littin, whose latest film, *Le Viuda de Montiel* (1979), based on the novel of the same name by Gabriel García Márquez, was shown at Pesaro, and Patricio Guzmán, director of *La Batalla de Chile*, a 3-part documentary

epic on the last months of Chile under a Popular Unity Government (which was filmed in Chile before the coup and edited in Cuba). Other less well-known directors whose work was shown in Pesaro included Orlando Lübbert (*El Paso*, 1980, the story of the escape of three Chileans across the Andes, and Angelina Vásquez (another of the few women directors from Latin America), *Gracias a la Vida*, 1980), about a woman who, pregnant from rape by a prison guard, joins her husband in exile. They try to come to terms with the pregnancy and decide whether or not to return to Chile. While they are marked by the culture of the country of their exile, almost all these films treat specifically Chilean themes and preoccupations and, taken together, could be said to constitute a Chilean national cinema in exile.

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David Will writes:

Claire Pajackowska's recent article 'The Heterosexual Presumption' (*Screen* vol 22 no 1) is so symptomatic of certain problems within the discourse of film studies, that I feel it is important to respond to it. I write as a psychoanalyst with a self-taught and more or less informed interest in film studies. My response, then, is that of a professional in another scientific discipline (psychoanalysis), criticising what I see as abuses and misapplications of that discipline in another context (film studies). I realise that this will leave me open to attacks from that left position that sees any appeals to professionalism as indicative of the exercise of a spurious ideological power, but so be it.

Ms Pajackowska's article is an extreme example of a particular tendency within the work of *Screen*: the idealisation of the work of significant figures, which are then elevated to the status of ego ideals. In the early 1970s, Althusser was one such, and, of course, Lacan has been another. There has been some working through of the idealisation of Althusser, but the problem of the idealisation of Lacan has not been so extensively considered, despite some, perhaps appropriate, cautions about Lacanian phallogocentrism usually from a feminist perspective. Before sketching out some of the hazards of the idealisation of Lacan,

using Ms Pajackowska's article as an empirical example, I should like to make a general point about the pathology of idealisation within film studies.

Film studies is a heterogeneous discipline like, for example, psychiatry. As such it must rely heavily on 'external' sciences, such as psychoanalysis and marxism, for its theoretical underpinnings. Any such discipline is in a potentially vulnerable position, since any fundamental change in the external sciences from which it receives underpinnings, may call into question work that has resulted from their application. One solution to this dilemma is for the practitioners and institutions of the heterogeneous discipline to seek out and rigorously adhere to a particularly revolutionary, or messianic or dogmatic brand of the external science required, thereby obviating anxieties about the 'solidity' of its foundations.

In psychiatry in Britain, for example, the prominent academic discourse is a two-fold brand of positivistic reductionism based on neuro-chemistry and behaviourism, both messianic and dogmatic discourses. In film studies, Althusserian and post-Althusserian marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis have filled the bill. I would argue that *part* of their appeal has been their messianic claims to have effected revolutions within their own sciences and the concomitant guarantees of apparent invulnerability that they carried with them in their more revolutionary

108 days. It must be stressed that I am not intending to be reductionistic here. There are and were, of course, other valid theoretical reasons for the appeal of the work of Althusser and Lacan. What concerns me is their invalid and a-theoretical attractions, the traces of which can function as major epistemological obstacles for film studies. I will now look at these traces as manifest in Ms Pajaczkowska's article.

The article is full of uncritical idealisation of both the post-Althusserians and Lacan, but I will only address the former when, as it so damagingly may, it bears directly on the latter. The idealisation of Lacan is such that within the article it becomes necessary to defend against that very idealisation by splitting Lacan into two objects, a good and a bad. So one striking feature of the article is the apparently contradictory values and uses attributed to Lacanian theory.

First the 'good Lacan'. In the 'review' of psychoanalytic theories of fetishism, Lacanian theory is used as the final arbiter of this theoretical (and clinical) problem within psychoanalysis. Having presented an extremely partial account of non-Lacanian views of fetishism, Ms Pajaczkowska pours scorn on the notion that the possibility of fetishism is barred to women, and justifies this scorn by an appeal to the power of the Master:

The question is of course absurd, it is a problem of pre-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, for although analysts such as Gillespie wrote on the issue at the same time as, or even after, Lacan their thinking remains pre-structuralist. [my emphasis]

The arrogance derived here from the identification with the idealised Lacan is astounding. Not only are all non-

Lacanian psychoanalysts who wrote on the subject of fetishism producers of absurd questions, but, it is implied ('wrote . . . *even after* Lacan') they committed the most unpardonable sin of all by not becoming Lacanians when, chronologically, they too could have shared Ms Pajaczkowska's idealisation of the Master. (I will at the end of this letter indicate the factual theoretical errors that the Lacanian gloss covers up. Fetishism and bisexuality are by no means closed subjects within psychoanalysis, neatly tied up by Lacanian theory). This idealisation leaves her with no qualms about completely disqualifying an entire body of theoretical work within psychoanalysis by fiat. No doubt her arrogance here is overdetermined, further reinforced by a post-Althusserian distaste for all things empirical — 'mere case histories' — for example.

However the 'bad Lacan' soon makes an appearance. When she moves on to look at Lacanian theory's relevance for a feminist theory of the cinema, Ms Pajaczkowska's text becomes troubled. There is an initial caution against the dangers of using 'Freud's metapsychology and Lacan to build a new monolith in conventions in theory'. Lacan is implicitly attacked for his sexism, then psychoanalysis is attacked *tout court* for being obsessed with the question of 'the castration complex'. Christian Metz is then invoked (another ideal ego?) to remind us that psychoanalysis itself may be politically suspect.

The forceful splitting of the Lacanian object, on the one hand the ideologically pure Excalibur with which to cut up psychoanalytic theory, on the other an ideologically suspect, obsessional, sexist, and reactionary bag of tricks, is dramatic, and dangerous:

Dramatic because it tellingly indicates

the price that Freud (in 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego') indicates must be paid for the identification with an ego ideal. The ambivalence made inevitable by such an identification, generates a burden of hatred that must be discharged. In this case the ambivalence inevitable in the idealisation of Lacan is dealt with, regressively, by splitting the object. The 'bad Lacan' can then become the sole object of hatred, preserving 'the good Lacan' as an object of idealisation.

Dangerous because the idealisation of 'the good Lacan' leads to an uncritical view of Lacan's work *within* psychoanalysis and hence to a disastrously restricted and often grossly distorted view of psychoanalysis. This tendency has led to an implicit assumption within film studies that Lacan's work represents such a major advance within psychoanalysis that, to all intents and purposes, 'Lacanian theory' equals 'All adequate psychoanalytic theory'. Now, however attractive this might be if it were true, from my perspective inside psychoanalysis, this is a ridiculous claim. Obviously to justify that assertion would require considerable space, so, at present, I leave it as a polemical position. (Those who once had similar views about Althusser's work *vis à vis* marxism, may, however, like to reflect on how *that* idealisation has stood the test of time).

The dangers of this idealisation are that premature closure is reached on questions that are still open. It is unfortunate that Ms Pajaczowska's psychoanalytic problematic is so restricted since the questions she raises are crucial. Space does not permit a detailed discussion but, from my perspective, two central issues loom large:

1 The incorrect appropriation of the

clinical phenomenon of fetishism by Lacan as a metaphor for the global structure of subjectivity followed by the appropriation by Barthes of this strained metaphor as an equally incorrect meta-metaphor for the subject confronting the spectacle. A theoretically dubious meta-metaphor is not a secure foundation for rigorous scientific work on the position and pleasure of the subject in pornography.

2 The question of bi-sexuality. In my view this is, to put it mildly, fudged within contemporary psychoanalysis, with, on the one hand, lip service being paid to Freud's original views and, on the other, a tendency to overlook them.

This is a crucial area for film theory in any discussion of pornography, and pleasure. If Freud's original theory of bisexuality is true it provides one answer, disarming in its simplicity, to Ms Pajaczowska's question about why women are stimulated by heterosexist porn films.

However, if Freud's theory is true, it undercuts virtually the entire edifice of psychoanalytically based feminist film theory. If we take Freud at the letter seeing activity/passivity etc as residing in both sexes and being expressed differently only in terms of whether that expression is direct or indirect (ie by identification) then any hope of distinguishing 'male pleasure' and 'female pleasure' is, of course, doomed to failure. If on the other hand it is possible either to re-situate, develop or discount Freud's original theory of bisexuality, then this project of feminist film theory may have some validity. That validity can only be underpinned by work *within* psychoanalytic theory far more rigorous than that produced by an idealisation of Lacanian theory.